TUESDAY
April 21, 2026

BENGALURU
CITY EDITION
16 Pages ₹ 6.00

THE HINDU

www.thehindu.com

INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

Vol. 57 • No. 94

RNI No. KARENG/1970/49945

To subscribe, give a missed call at 9828331787 or scan QR code

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ELECTORAL MAPPING

9.8 lakh deletions in Odisha's voter rolls

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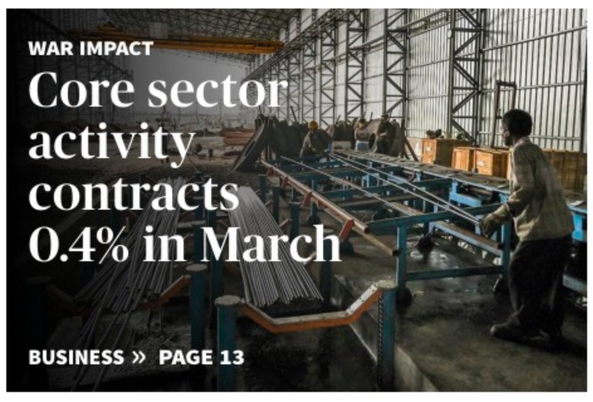

WAR IMPACT

Core sector activity contracts 0.4% in March

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'Forests could double carbon storage by 2100'

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BIG MISMATCH

Vulnerability in India's LPG supply model

Design of system must change to address gaps

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THE REVIVAL

Tilak's innings turns things around for MI

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NEARBY

Muslim leaders defend action against MLCs

BENGALURU
A section of Muslim leaders in the Congress appears to believe that the action was necessary against MLCs, and that a "misleading campaign" is being run to portray that the party is acting against the minority community. » PAGE 6

Special court slams three police officers

BENGALURU
A special court made scathing observations against three police officers for admitting that they had tendered "false evidence" under oath before the magistrate in the murder case involving Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni. » PAGE 6

Iran undecided on talks; Trump to keep blockade

Tehran condemns U.S. attack on an Iran-flagged vessel in the Gulf of Oman, says it will make 'necessary decisions about the future path with careful consideration of its national interests'

Stanly Johny

Tehran said on Monday it had yet to decide on joining a new round of peace talks with the United States in Pakistan, citing "bad faith" and "historical mistrust", while U.S. President Donald Trump said the naval blockade imposed on Iran would remain in place "until a deal is reached".

"So far we have not made any decision regarding the next round of talks... Iran will make the necessary decisions about the future path with careful consideration of its national interests," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei said in Tehran, according to Tasnim News Agency.

"From the early days of the ceasefire, we were faced with the U.S.'s bad faith, contradictory statements, followed by a naval blockade," Mr. Baqaei said. Even after an understanding was reached, Iran encountered "maritime actions" in the Strait of Hormuz, he added, referring to a U.S. attack on an Iran-flagged vessel in the Gulf of Oman on Sunday.

Trouble at sea: The Iranian container ship *Touska* was reportedly attacked by the U.S. Navy on Sunday night. REUTERS

In an interview with *The New York Post*, Mr. Trump downplayed Iran's comments, saying he was willing to meet Iranian leaders if a breakthrough is reached. "We are supposed to have talks. So I would assume at this point nobody is playing games," he said, adding that Vice-President J.D. Vance, Special Envoy Steve Witkoff, and Jared Kushner, the President's son-in-law, would take part in talks.

Later in the day, Mr. Trump left a series of social media posts claiming that he was winning the war and that the deal his administration was seeking was "better" than the 2015 nuclear agreement reached between Tehran, Obama administration, and other world powers.

"I'm winning [the] war by a lot... The enemy is confused... The blockade, which we will not take off until there is a deal, is absolutely destroying Iran. They are losing $500 million a day," he wrote.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

ED searches premises linked to Haris's sons in crypto case

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday conducted search operations at 12 premises across Karnataka, including those linked to Mohammed Haris Nalapad and Omar Farook Nalapad, sons of N. A. Harris, sitting MLA from Shantinagar constituency in Bengaluru.

Linked to Sriki

The searches were conducted under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) in connection with a cybercrime and cryptocurrency-related money laundering case involving Srikrishna Ramesh, alias Sriki, and others. The agency has alleged that both individuals are close associates of Sriki and among the key beneficiaries of the proceeds of the crime. Searches were also carried out at locations associated with Aqeeb Khan, grandson of former Union Minister K. Rahman Khan. Aqeeb Khan is also alleged to be a direct beneficiary of the proceeds of crime.

Based on FIRs

The central agency initiated the probe based on multiple FIRs and charge sheets filed by the Karnataka Police, which alleged offences such as hacking of national and international websites, theft of bitcoins, extortion, and violations under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

According to officials, the investigation has revealed a well-structured *modus operandi* adopted by the accused.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 7

21 killed as bus rolls down hillside in J&K

The Hindu Bureau
JAMMU

Twenty-one people were killed and over 61 injured after an overcrowded passenger bus tumbled down a hillside in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir on Monday. The bus crushed an autorickshaw before landing upside down on the road below.

The bus was en route to Udhampur from Ramnagar when the accident occurred around 10 a.m. Officials said those travelling in the autorickshaw were also injured.

The bus driver may have lost control while negotiating a sharp turn in Kagort village, causing the vehicle to plunge off the road, Shiv Kumar Sharma, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Udhampur-Reasi Range, said. "The bus rolled down around 60-70 feet," he said.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

ಓಂ ಶ್ರೀ ಗುರು ಬಸವಲಿಂಗಾಯ ನಮಃ

ಅಮೃತ ಮಹೋತ್ಸವ ಸಮಿತಿ, ಹಿರೇಮಠ ಸಂಸ್ಥಾನ, ಭಾಲ್ಕಿ

ಪೂಜ್ಯ ಶ್ರೀ ಮ.ಘ.ಚ. ಡಾ. ಚನ್ನಬಸವ ಪಟ್ಟದ್ದೇವರ
27ನೆಯ ಸ್ಮರಣೋತ್ಸವ

ಹಾಗೂ

ರಾಜ್ಯ ಹೊರರಾಜ್ಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಬಸವತತ್ವ ಪ್ರಸಾರ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿರುವ ಮಹಾಜಂಗಮರು, ಗಡಿಭಾಗದಲ್ಲಿ ಶೈಕ್ಷಣಿಕ ಕ್ರಾಂತಿ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿರುವ ಅಕ್ಷರಸಂತ, ಬಡವರ, ನಿರ್ಗತಿಕ ಹಾಗೂ ಅನಾಥರ ಬಂಧು, ಮಾತೃಹೃದಯಿಗಳು, ಹಿರೇಮಠ ಸಂಸ್ಥಾನ ವಿದ್ಯಾಪೀಠ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಯ ಸಂಸ್ಥಾಪಕ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರುಅನುಭವಮಂಟಪ ಬಸವಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಹಾಗೂ ಲಿಂಗಾಯತ ಮಠಾಧಿಪತಿಗಳ ಒಕ್ಕೂಟದ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರಾದ

ಪೂಜ್ಯ ಶ್ರೀ ಮ.ಘ.ಚ. ನಾಡೋಜ ಡಾ. ಬಸವಲಿಂಗ ಪಟ್ಟದ್ದೇವರ
ಅಮೃತ ಮಹೋತ್ಸವ

ಗೌರವಾನ್ವಿತ ಸಿ.ಪಿ.ರಾಧಾಕೃಷ್ಣನ್
ಘನತೆವೆತ್ತ ಉಪರಾಷ್ಟ್ರಪತಿಗಳು, ಭಾರತ ಸರಕಾರ, ನವದೆಹಲಿ

ಗೌರವಾನ್ವಿತ ಥಾವರ್ ಚಂದ್ ಗೆಹ್ಲೋಟ್
ಘನತೆವೆತ್ತ ರಾಜ್ಯಪಾಲರು,
ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರಕಾರ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು

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ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರು,
ಭಾರತೀಯ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಕಾಂಗ್ರೆಸ್, ನವದೆಹಲಿ

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ಸರ್ವರಿಗೂ ಹಾರ್ದಿಕ ಸುಸ್ವಾಗತ

ದಿನಾಂಕ: 22-04-2026 ಬುಧವಾರ ಸಮಯ ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 10:00 • ಸ್ಥಳ: ಶ್ರೀ ಚನ್ನಬಸವಾಶ್ರಮ, ಭಾಲ್ಕಿ

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ಹಾಗೂ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಉಸ್ತುವಾರಿ ಸಚಿವರು, ಬೀದರ

ಶರಣ ಪ್ರಕಾಶ ಖಂಡ್ರೆ
ಗೌರವಾಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರು, ಸ್ವಾಗತ ಸಮಿತಿ
ಮಾಜಿ ಶಾಸಕರು, ಭಾಲ್ಕಿ

ತಾವೂ ಬನ್ನಿ,
ತಮ್ಮವರನ್ನೂ ಕರೆತನ್ನಿ !

A BG-BGE

I watched the 2013 match from behind a glass wall... glad I have made it inside

Candidates winner and World championship challenger Vaishali credits her support system for making remarkable turnarounds in big-ticket events; she says meticulous preparation with her team played a big part in her success in Cyprus

FIDE

INTERVIEW

R. Vaishali

P.K. Ajith Kumar

She staged a coup in Cyprus. R. Vaishali, seeded eighth in a field of eight, won the women's Candidates chess tournament, the qualifying event for the World championship match. The 24-year-old from Chennai is the first Indian to do so in the 74-year history of the Candidates. Excerpts:

What are your thoughts on the World title match against Ju Wenjun later this year?

I watched a World championship match from behind a glass wall in Chennai in 2013. It was the match between Viswanathan Anand sir and Magnus Carlsen. I was just a kid then. I was dreaming of playing and winning the World championship even those days.

Interestingly, D. Gukesh, the reigning World champion, had also watched that match live...

Yes, I am glad that we had the match in Chennai. Many chess players, when they were kids, were able to follow it. I am sure many kids, like me, dreamt of being there inside that glass hall.

How did you prepare for the Candidates?

I had back-to-back camps with my team, and I didn't play any tournaments for three or four months. All that preparation definitely helped me a lot. When you work a lot, you get a lot of confidence. In some of the games here, I got to play the lines that we prepared for.

You began with four draws and lost in the fifth round...

In a long tournament like the Candidates, I knew I could make a comeback. I was not thinking too much about the standings; I was more worried about the way I was playing, I felt like my games were not the best. They were shaky; I had been defending in almost every game.

But in the second half, you played superbly. What would you attribute that to?

I started to focus on the quality of my games. And I wanted to play good games.

There seems to be a pattern. You go through a tough phase, you then bounce back strongly, winning several games in a row. It happened at your first Candidates too – after starting not so well in Toronto, you won your last five games to be tied for second place.

Yes, this has always been the pattern for me in tournaments. After I hit the absolute low, I peak. And that has been the case throughout my career.

Even when you were a kid, in age-group tournaments?

Mostly, yes. But I was mostly winning my events.

So how do you manage these remarkable turnarounds during a tournament?

I have to thank the people around me. They motivate me. It is because of their support – my family, my trainers.

Looking back at the Candidates, you must be pleased with the way you scored that crushing win over Kateryna Lagno in the must-win final round. That victory gave you the title. So it was probably the most important game of your career so far...

Definitely. I am very happy that with all the pressure around, I managed to play such a controlled game. I was better throughout.

You hardly gave her a chance. You kept that pressure on...

Yes. I didn't expect her to play the Dragon variation, but I had prepared for it before the tournament, and it helped me. The situation was that if she won, she had some chances (of finishing first). The field was wide open and anybody could have won. She was also in a situation where she could have played for more. And that provoked her to play a very aggressive line like Dragon. And I was very happy to see some Sicilian on the board. Because it is very nice to get a fighting position.

Were you keeping an eye on Bibisara Assaubayeva's game with Divya Deshmukh? If Bibisara had won, there would have been a tie-breaker...

Yes, here and there. Because it was tough not to follow it. When I got the advantageous position, I made sure I focused more on my game. Because it felt like it was in my hands. Anyway, I had to win, no matter what happened in the other game.

Before that, you scored a crucial win against Divya. You must have been glad with the way you finished that game, with the exchange sacrifice...

It was satisfying. I felt like I was outplaying her from the beginning. I also liked my game against Aleksandra Goryachkina with black pieces, because it is not easy to outplay her. You do not see her losing with white like that. It was a very interesting game. Also, it is not the way I usually win games. The queens were off the board after 13 moves. And it was a positional game.

You must have been delighted that coach R.B. Ramesh reached Cyprus just in time for the closing ceremony...

Yes. Pragg and I have been working with him for the last 12 years. It has been a long journey. We have seen many victories as well as some tough tournaments together. He had promised us that he would come to Cyprus if we won the Candidates. He had to cancel some of his training camps to come here.

Pragg was also in Cyprus, playing in the Open section. Did you discuss your games with him?

We talked about how things were going every day. For my last couple of games, we discussed what openings I could play. I also had a team that was helping me throughout. Of course it was also nice to have him with me. It was a very tough tournament for him, but I am sure he will come back strong.

How much of a help has the WestBridge Anand Chess Academy (WACA) been to you?

A lot of credit must be given to WACA, which has been supporting me for many years now. The last few years have not been easy; there were some tough tournaments, but WACA has continued to help me in every way possible. The support was incredible because for a tournament like this, you need back-to-back camps and things like that. What WACA has been doing for Indian chess is remarkable. For the last five or six years, it has been a great journey.

Anand is a mentor at WACA...

He gives you confidence. Even having a small chat with him helps. Ahead of the Candidates, we had a session in which I discussed some of the lines that I played here.

Koneru Humpy is the only Indian to play a women's World championship match so far, and you are going to be the second to do so. Your thoughts on Humpy's contribution to women's chess in India?

It is amazing. Humpy and D. Harika have been playing for decades now. And they are still among the world's top players.

Humpy won her second World rapid crown two years ago...

She was close to winning it last year too. It is inspiring to see what she does every time. Winning a tournament is not easy. You can play, but it is tough to win a tournament every time. She is also a mother, and she is balancing her career with her family duties; so does Harika. I have a lot of respect for both of them. My love and respect for them just keeps on growing.

And they were playing when women's chess wasn't anywhere near as popular as it is today.

Yes, there was no attention. And now we have so many girls coming up, playing chess and becoming professionals. We are just following their path.

How much of a support has your family been?

I am very happy that my mother was with me throughout the tournament (Candidates). And my father has also made a lot of sacrifices. Since Pragg, our mother and I are travelling most of the time for our tournaments, he has to live alone.

You had a lot of backing from your school, Velammal, as well...

Definitely, I studied there from LKG to Std. XII. They were of great help to me and Pragg. It is not easy to be a professional player, and we had some financial issues at the beginning. Velammal gave us free education and cash awards at the right time. They also helped with flight tickets for some tournaments. I have also received a lot of help from Venkatrama Raja sir of Ramco Cements. He continues to support me and I had met him to seek his blessings for the Candidates. I was one of the kids sent by Velammal for Anand sir's reception at the Chennai airport after his triumph against Boris Gelfand sir in the 2012 World title match. Anand sir has always been a huge inspiration for me. Pragg has also inspired me.

ADVERTISEMENT

Nav Nirman Ke 9 Varsh | Agriculture

From Annadata to 'UP Ka Vidhata'

Advanced Agriculture, Prosperous Farmers

Agricultural growth doubled from 8.5% (2016-17) to 18% (2025-26), benefiting over 3 crore farmers through DBT, irrigation, and market reforms.

8.5% → 18% AGRICULTURAL GROWTH RATE (2016-17 to 2025-26)

₹99,000+CRORE TRANSFERRED TO FARMERS UNDER PM KISHAN SAMMAN NIDHI (22 INSTALMENTS)

23.30 LAKH FARMERS CONNECTED IN 14,170 VILLAGES (LAB TO LAND INITATIVE)

Since 2017, Uttar Pradesh has prioritised farmer welfare through decisive policy reforms, including a historic farm loan waiver benefiting over 86 lakh farmers. Sustained investments in irrigation, crop insurance, and direct benefit transfers have strengthened rural incomes and resilience. As a result, agricultural growth has risen from 8.5% in 2016-17 to 18% in 2025-26. This transformation is also reflected in improved market access, enhanced productivity, and greater financial inclusion for farmers across the state. With technology adoption and better infrastructure, agriculture in Uttar Pradesh is steadily becoming more efficient and future-ready.

Before 2017, many farmers faced severe debt distress. Today, targeted reforms have improved financial stability and confidence.

Empowering Farmers, Enriching Uttar Pradesh

Building Confidence, Driving Growth

Before 2017, farmers struggled with debt and distress. Today, they stand with dignity as key contributors to economic growth.

Financial Support:

- Historic Farm Loan Waiver benefiting 86 lakh farmers
- Farmers supported through crop insurance, DBT schemes, subsidies, and free electricity for tube wells
- ₹99,003.69 crore transferred under PM Kisan Samman Nidhi (22 instalments)
- ₹5,660.33 crore compensation under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana
- ₹50/day support under Mukhyamantri Sahbhagita Yojana for cattle care

Infrastructure & Capacity:

- 86,128 solar pumps installed under PM Kusum
- 6,655 Agrijunction centers established
- Drone subsidy (40-50%) for FPOs & agri graduates
- 15.20 lakh farmers trained in Gram Panchayat sessions
- 169.51 lakh Farmer IDs issued
- **59.75 crore seedlings generated employment for around 60,000 women**

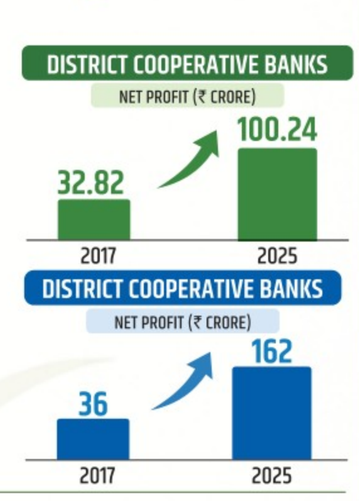
Farmer Welfare & Direct Benefits

Schemes Delivering Impact at Scale

- 492.46 lakh Kisan Credit Cards issued
- Crop loans worth ₹12.64 lakh crore distributed
- ₹45,448.33 crore (Kharif 2025) & ₹88,720.67 crore (Rabi 2026)
- 2.88 crore Farmer IDs targeted, 1.99 crore completed
- 2.10 crore farmers trained under Kisan Pathshala

Cooperative Strength & Credit Access

- ₹13.42 lakh crore crop loans distributed
- 492.46 lakh Kisan Credit Cards issued
- 32,732 farm ponds constructed
- 546.85 lakh quintals seeds distributed



GROWING PROFITS. STRONGER COOPERATIVES.

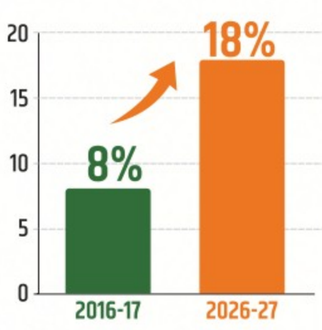
Horticulture & Export Growth

- Area: 21.41 → 25.66 lakh hectares
- Production: 3.87 → 6.03 crore MT
- Exports: ₹400 → ₹1,700 crore
- Farmer income: ₹41,000 → ₹1,25,000 crore

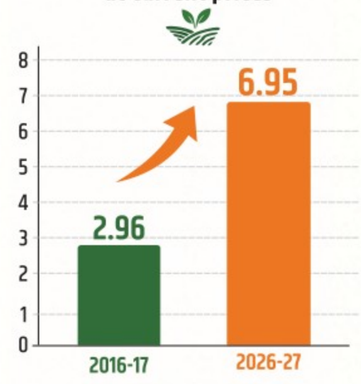
Agriculture: The Growth Engine

Accelerating Growth and Progress

Agricultural growth rate increased from 8.5% (2016-17) to 18% (2025-26)



GSDP (Agriculture & Allied) ₹2.96 lakh crore → ₹6.95 lakh crore at current prices



- 76% land under agriculture, 86% irrigation coverage
- UP contributes 21% of India's foodgrain production with only 11% cultivable land
- 400 lakh tonnes fruits & vegetables annually, Rank 1 in India

UP-Agrees: Future Ready Agriculture

A World Bank-supported project improving climate-resilient and market-linked agriculture across 28 districts.

- ₹4,000 crore World Bank-supported project
- **Focus:** crop clusters, digital agriculture, supply chain
- **Benefits:** 10 lakh farmers (30% women), 1 lakh fisher families
- Covers 28 districts: Purvanchal (21 districts) + Bundelkhand (7 districts)

Empowered Agricultural Markets

Modern Mandi, Digital Farmers

- "UP Mandi Bhav" mobile app providing real-time price transparency and reducing dependency on middlemen.
- 27 modern mandis & 87 rural haats constructed
- 6.42 crore e-transactions via e-Mandi
- ₹197.85 crore subsidy to 87,223 farmers
- **Smart facilities:** e-pass, digital payments, farmer canteens

Procurement With Trust

2024-25: 57.70 LMT paddy procured, ₹13,370 crore paid

- 2025–26: 62.30 LMT procurement, ₹15,000 crore paid
- MSP: ₹2369 (Common), ₹2389 (Grade A)
- Farmers free to sell in open market or procurement centres

Ensuring timely payments and price assurance for farmers

Sugarcane Prosperity Model

Growth of Sugarcane Economy

₹3.16 lakh crore paid to farmers since 2017

28.61 lakh hectares under sugarcane cultivation

83.25 tonnes per hectare sugar production

Key Points: Ethanol production: 42 → 187.80 crore litres

- 120 sugar mills operational
- 10 lakh employment generated
- 25% additional income via intercropping
- **Uttar Pradesh ranks 1st in sugarcane and sugar production (57.26% national share)**

Irrigation & Infrastructure Revolution

Largest Irrigated Area in India

- Irrigation expanded from 82 → 105 lakh hectares
- 1,309 projects completed
- 76,527 km canal network
- 36,094 government tubewells

Expanding irrigation has reduced monsoon dependency and improved crop reliability.

52.13 lakh hectares irrigation potential created

241.29 lakh farmers benefited

Dairy Leadership

- Milk production: 388.15 LMT (16.2% of India)
- Nand Baba Milk Mission
- ₹50/day DBT under Sahbhagita Yojana

12.38 lakh cattle protected

Record Food Production

Dairy has emerged as a key supplementary income source for rural households.

557.46 LAKH METRIC TONNES 2016-17 → 557.46 LAKH METRIC TONNES 2016-17

Key Highlights:

- 21% contribution to India's foodgrain production
- Oilseed production increased by 192.98%
- Target 2026–27: 753.55 lakh MT foodgrain

32% GROWTH

Fueling Prosperity, Feeding India

> "Our farmers are not just food providers, they are the creators of Uttar Pradesh's future. Their prosperity is our government's top priority."
>
> - **Yogi Adityanath**, Chief Minister, U.P.

From Annadata to Architects of a Prosperous Uttar Pradesh

With sustained reforms, technological adoption and farmer-centric policies, Uttar Pradesh continues to set new benchmarks in agricultural growth, productivity and rural empowerment. The state's journey reflects a commitment to making farmers self-reliant, prosperous, and globally competitive.

Committed to Farmer Welfare | Driving Agricultural Excellence | Building a Prosperous Uttar Pradesh

A BG-BGE

Long UPSC prep cycles take a toll on aspirants' mental health

The psychological experience of preparing for UPSC examination differs from other competitive examinations, including JEE for IITs and NEET for medical education, because aspirants typically prepare for the exam for several years, which leads to chronic rather than short-term stress

Rohan Singh
Neeraj Kumar Singh

Civil service aspirants wait outside an examination centre as they arrive to appear for the UPSC preliminary exam, in Jammu, in March 2026. ANI

For lakhs of young Indians, the national civil services examination is not just a test: it becomes part of who they are. More than 10 lakh aspirants take the examination every year. Many spend several years preparing, often relocating to coaching hubs such as Delhi and Hyderabad.

With only around a thousand positions on offer, the examination is among the world's most competitive. Experts are concerned that this prolonged, high-stakes process is also reshaping aspirants' sense of self.

For many aspirants, preparation is marked by long hours of study and constant anxiety about outcomes. One aspirant who requested anonymity said the uncertainty is worse than the workload: "My biggest fear is not performing to my full potential despite consistent effort."

Hidden psychological cost

Passing the qualifying exam for the Union Public Services Commission (UPSC) comes with a sustained form of psychological strain. In a 2024 study involving UPSC aspirants, Madiha Fatima, PhD scholar and senior research fellow at the University of Lucknow's Department of Psychology, found that 70% of aspirants reported moderate to severe distress.

"The pressure of uncertainty whether one will qualify, the vast syllabus, fear of forgetting, and the ever-changing exam pattern all contribute," she said. Persistent self-doubt, she added, often leaves aspirants questioning whether they are capable or simply wasting their time.

"Privileged students don't face the same stress. Underprivileged aspirants struggle to afford courses or materials. Some work part-time, reducing rest and study time," Ms. Fathima said.

Years of repeated failures also erode self-confidence, leading to avoidance and isolation that affects psychological health. She pointed to delayed answer keys, unpredictable paper patterns, and the vast seat-to-aspirant gap as structural stressors.

According to independent psychiatrist A.K. Mishra, such prolonged identification reshapes how aspirants perceive setbacks: "Aspirants often begin to anchor their sense of self-worth almost entirely around the examination."

Chronic stress, burnout

The psychological experience of preparing for the UPSC examination differs from other competitive examinations, including the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) for the IITs and the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for medical education. This is because aspirants typically prepare for the UPSC exam for several years, which leads to chronic rather than short-term stress.

According to Dr. Mishra, such protracted preparation shifts stress from an acute phase to a persistent background state of cognitive load, decision fatigue, and reduced recovery. He also said prolonged uncertainty can produce "chronic anticipatory stress", where repeated attempts without success diminish the individual's sense of control and also contribute to emotional exhaustion.

Abhishek Pathak, a psychiatrist in Lucknow, also said long-term preparation shares features with chronic stress and burnout. Prolonged uncertainty can lead to "anticipatory anxiety and identity fusion." However, he noted that the impact is bidirectional – it enhances risks in some people and promotes growth in others – and that early support can mitigate adverse outcomes.

Prolonged uncertainty is particularly challenging for young adults in their 20s, a phase typically associated with career formation and financial independence. When many years in this stage of life are instead devoted to a single exam, the stakes can become intensely personal.

Why the dream endures

Psychology alone can't explain the toll that preparing for the UPSC exam takes. Sociologists have argued that the appeal of the civil services is rooted in India's social structure, where the bureaucracy has long held authority and prestige and families widely perceive the services to be a path to upward mobility.

South Asian University sociologist Sumedha Dutta traced this aspiration to the colonial origins of India's civil services. After independence, the prestige that came with a member of the civil services, including the high salary, job security, housing, and pension, remained intact. "Civil servants are part of the power elite," she said.

The yearning for government jobs didn't decline even in the post-liberalisation era even as the private sector burgeoned. "Private sector jobs, despite high salaries, do not match up in terms of stability, numerous perks, pension, power, and prestige," Dr. Dutta said.

She pointed to matrimonial advertisements where civil servants rank highly, plus the media's role in valorising successful aspirants, as factors that reinforce the exam's status in the collective imagination.

The aspirant ecosystem surrounding the exam in fact reflects this collective aspiration. Entire neighbourhoods in Delhi and Prayagraj are dedicated to coaching institutes, libraries, and hostels, forming a parallel education economy.

> The pressure of uncertainty whether one will qualify, the vast syllabus, fear of forgetting, and the ever-changing exam pattern all contribute
>
> **MADIHA FATIMA**
> Senior research fellow at the University of Lucknow

Among them, coaching institutes – while they are central to this ecosystem – remain largely unexamined in shaping or mitigating psychological distress. The aspirant quoted earlier said, "Coaching centres benefit financially from prolonged preparation cycles. There is no accountability, no oversight."

Within this ecosystem, aspirants form tightly knit peer groups and share educational materials, attend lectures together, and discuss current affairs late into the night. While these networks offer support, they can also intensify pressure through constant comparison. As Dr. Dutta said, this in-group solidarity is also shaped by a sense of collective superiority.

"UPSC aspirants already envision themselves as part of the elite group which runs the administration of the nation state," she explained. "They believe other career pathways are 'mere professions' while civil servants are the ones who decide the fate of other professionals in many ways."

This shared imagination of a secure, prestigious future, she added, can also help aspirants navigate the hardships that come with prolonged preparation.

Inside the system

Psychologists have stressed that while ambition and perseverance are valuable, preparation ecosystems must also recognise the emotional risks of prolonged uncertainty. Access to counselling, peer support, and realistic career guidance could help reduce this burden.

Harivansh Chaturvedi, director-general of the Institute of Integrated Learning in Management, New Delhi, said that while many aspirants spend years preparing, doing so reflects individual choice within a highly aspirational system rather than a purely systemic failure. However, he acknowledged that unsuccessful attempts can still result in significant personal loss of time and effort.

To this end, he suggested faster evaluation, more frequent preliminary exams, streamlined selection, and specialised undergraduate programmes aligned with public administration.

Ms. Fatima said most research studies have been descriptive: they have identified problems, not solutions. She also argued that the scale of aspiration needs rethinking and suggested encouraging youth towards other professions or startups.

Dr. Mishra added that preparation could, over time, take a maladaptive form in some cases, particularly when it loses flexibility and proportionality. "Key indicators include persistent distress, neglect of alternative roles, inability to reassess goals, and compulsive continuation driven by fear of disengagement," he said.

At the same time, sociologists argue that the popularity of the civil services exam reflects deeper structural issues in India's employment landscape. Dr. Dutta said the UPSC ecosystem "unravels India's development inadequacies". Rising GDP hasn't matched jobs, the informal sector offers little security, and there is a major skill gap.

For many graduates, particularly from smaller towns, the civil services thus remain one of a few career options seen as both prestigious and secure.

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Sundarbans is the largest contiguous mangrove forest in the world. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Sundarbans may be less blue than it seems

Vasudevan Mukunth

Researchers from the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Kolkata, have reported that microplastics could interfere with the natural food web and alter the carbon budget of the Bay of Bengal.

As microplastics weather and break down, they leach dissolved organic carbon into the water; the microbes living on the plastic also create 'biogenic' carbon, the team reported in a paper due to be published in the May 2026 issue of the *Journal of Hazardous Materials Advances*.

The authors conducted a year-long study to understand how small plastic particles move through the ecosystem and how they might interfere with natural carbon cycles.

The Sundarbans is the world's largest contiguous mangrove forest. Because it sits at the confluence of major rivers like the Ganga and the Brahmaputra, a large amount of waste generated upstream is also carried into the delta.

As microplastics break down in water, they release dissolved organic carbon, which can be food for bacteria to grow and multiply much faster than they would naturally

While scientists have known that the area is polluted, they have lacked detailed information on how microplastics behave in the surface water across different seasons and how much carbon they contribute to the environment.

Between October 2021 and October 2022, the IISER Kolkata collected water samples twice a month from three locations near Sagar Island in the Mooriganga estuary, then used advanced laboratory techniques to identify the types of plastic and observe how the particles were breaking down.

This way, the team uncovered a high concentration of microplastics, ranging from about 5 particles per liter to over 58 particles per liter. Their levels were around 40% higher during the monsoon season because, the researchers concluded, heavy rainfall washed plastic waste from the land and urban drains into the estuary. In these months, they also found a surge in what they called "colourless fragments" – likely older, weathered pieces of plastic being moved by surface runoff.

Around half of the plastics were fibres, likely from textiles, followed by fragments. The most common materials were polypropylene, which is used in packaging, and polyethylene terephthalate, used to make water bottles.

High-resolution imaging revealed that the microplastics were not clean but had cracks, pits, and grooves, suggesting that they were breaking down into even smaller nanoplastics. The researchers also found plastispheres, which are complex communities of bacteria and microbes living on the surface of the plastic.

Crucially, because the plastics are roughly 90% carbon, they were acting as a "novel carbon reservoir", the researchers wrote in their paper. As microplastics break down in water, they release dissolved organic carbon, which can be food for bacteria to grow and multiply much faster than they would naturally. The life-forms growing on the plastic were producing carbon of their own, called biogenic carbon.

Mangroves are blue-carbon ecosystems, meaning they are efficient at capturing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. However, the authors added, the introduction of carbon in the form of plastics could render them less efficient. Microplastics in the Sundarbans are now a significant part of the ecosystem's carbon cycle.

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

Where rivers and cities meet

Vasudevan Mukunth

Please send in your answers to science@thehindu.co.in

QUESTION 1
The name of this city in Arabic means "elephant's trunk" — which it earned because it is located in a peninsula shaped in this way, formed by the merging of the blue-green Blue Nile and the muddier White Nile. Which city is this?

QUESTION 2
_____ in Peru is the world's largest city that is inaccessible by road yet which is also not an island. It has a population of around 5 lakh. It is also called the Peruvian Amazon and lies at the convergence of the Amazon, Itaya, and Nanay rivers. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 3
A major node in the trans-Saharan trade from the 13th to the 16th centuries, _____ lies at the point where the Niger river reaches its northernmost arc into the desert. Back then, it was where traders exchanged West African gold and salt; it also housed three large mosques and several Islamic universities. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 4
The city of X lies 1,500 km inland from the Atlantic Ocean, at the confluence of the Negro and Amazon rivers. It grew rapidly during the rubber boom of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when it briefly became one of the wealthiest cities in South America. Name X.

QUESTION 5
This city has been continuously inhabited since around 1200 BC. It lies on the west bank of a river, at the point where the river bends towards the north. This bend is significant in Hindu cosmology and the city has been a centre of religious pilgrimage throughout its history. Name it.

VISUAL: Name this iconic city of 32 million in China located where the Jialing and Yangtze rivers come together. DAVID290 (CC BY-SA)

Answers to April 16 quiz:
1. Tree whose outer bark peels off at different times of year – **Ans: Rainbow eucalyptus**
2. "Upside down" tree that excels at storing water – **Ans: Baobab**
3. Property of Jabuticaba tree due to which its fruits grow on the trunk – **Ans: Cauliflorous**
4. Colony of quaking aspens in Utah that is a single organism – **Ans: Pando**
5. Tree with stilt-like roots that allows it to 'walk' – **Ans: Walking palm**

Visual: Methuselah
First contact: K.N. Viswanathan | Tamal Biswas | Prem Nath Tiwari | Anmol Agrawal

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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Persons arrested in Turkiye with suspected links to IS

90 Turkiye on Monday said it had arrested 90 people with suspected links to the Islamic State jihadist group, two weeks after a deadly shoot-out outside the Israeli consulate in Istanbul. A total of 198 people were detained a day after the April 7 attack in a nationwide sweep against "the terrorist organisation Daesh", another name for the Islamic State. AFP

Percentage contraction in core sector output in March

0.4 in per cent. The core sector output contracted by 0.4% in March, marking the first decline in five months as production of coal, crude oil, fertilizer, and electricity fell, according to official data. In February 2026, the eight core infrastructure sectors had expanded by 2.8%. In 2025-26, these sectors recorded a growth rate of 2.6% as against 4.5% in 2024-25. PTI

Department of Post's revenue for the financial year 2025-26

15,296 in ₹ crore. The Dept. of Posts has clocked revenue of ₹15,296 crore for the financial year 2025-26, a 16% growth year-on-year, Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Monday. Announcing the revenue scorecard, Mr. Scindia said the year has been "historic" for the department. PTI

Share of candidates in fray in T.N. elections with criminal cases

18 in per cent. According to a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), out of the 3,992 candidates analysed, 722 (18%) candidates have declared criminal cases against themselves. Of these, 404 (10%) have declared serious criminal cases. In 2021, out of 3,559 candidates analysed, 466 (13%) had declared criminal cases against themselves. PTI

Death toll from the Virudhunagar firecracker unit blast

25 With most bodies charred beyond recognition, identification remains difficult, police said on Monday, as the toll in the massive explosion at a fireworks unit near Kattanarpatti here rose to 25. The Virudhunagar district administration has announced ₹5.5 lakh *ex gratia* to the kin of the deceased. PTI

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U.S. power, Latin American resistance

The U.S.'s increasingly aggressive and coercive approach in Latin America echoes earlier periods of intervention and gunboat diplomacy; this stance is likely to fuel a resurgence of anti-imperialist thinking and resistance across the region

WORLD INSIGHT

Tony Wood

In Latin America, as in other parts of the world, the second Donald Trump administration has adopted an increasingly aggressive policy.

From drone strikes on purported drug traffickers to increased tariffs on imports, and from the blockade on fuel shipments and threats of invasion in Cuba to the January 3 military incursion into Venezuela, the U.S.'s more coercive approach to its hemispheric neighbours evokes an earlier period of U.S. foreign policy.

Many commentators have found echoes of the 1989 capture of Panamanian leader Manuel Noriega in the kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Others highlighted the longer history of U.S. interventions in Latin America, stretching back through the Cold War. That includes the Nixon administration's support for the 1973 coup against Salvador Allende in Chile or the CIA-sponsored removal of Guatemala's elected president, Jacobo Arbenz, in 1954.

Yet as a historian of early 20th-century Latin America, I believe the Trump administration's approach to Latin America more closely resembles an older pattern of U.S. policy. Between 1900 and the mid-1930s, U.S. forces intervened in one Latin American country after another. This practice was often justified by the Roosevelt Corollary, President Theodore Roosevelt's addition to the Monroe Doctrine. In cases of "chronic wrongdoing," Roosevelt said in 1904, the U.S. would find itself compelled to exercise an "international police power" in defence of U.S. interests.

But crucially, how Latin Americans responded to the U.S. exerting its dominance in the early 20th century may hold some lessons for the present day. One of the major side effects of the U.S.'s so-called gunboat diplomacy was an upsurge of resistance and anti-imperialist thinking in the region's political life.

In one voice: A protester carrying a sign reading 'Trump, Latin America is not yours,' as demonstrators oppose U.S. actions in Venezuela. FILE PHOTO

THE GIST

- The approach resembles an older pattern of U.S. policy, justified by the Roosevelt Corollary and the exercise of an "international police power".
- Across Latin America, movements from student organisations, labour unions, and leftist political parties put forward sharp critiques of U.S. power.
- Over time, deep divergences over strategy and principle pitted revolutionaries against democratic reformists, shaping politics in the region.

The roots of anti-imperialism

In the 30 years after Roosevelt asserted the U.S.'s right to intervene across the hemisphere, U.S. forces occupied Cuba three times – in 1906-09, 1912, and 1917-21. They also occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934 and the Dominican Republic from 1916 to 1924. In Nicaragua, the U.S. deployed the Marines from 1912 to 1925 and then again from 1926 to 1933, waging a counterinsurgency in which it used aerial bombardment for the first time.

Across much of the region, then, this was a time when the U.S. was quick to resort to force, unburdened by any concerns for Latin American countries' sovereignty.

Yet this era of external intervention also coincided with a period of remarkable political ferment, which I describe in my recently published book, *Radical Sovereignty*.

In one place after another, from Buenos Aires to Mexico City and from Havana to Lima, movements sprang up that put forward sharp critiques of U.S power. Many of them grew out of student organisations in the late 1910s, while others drew on the rising strength of labour unions and newly formed leftist political parties.

In 1923, rural workers in the Mexican state of Veracruz formed a Peasant League. From the outset, they saw local issues as closely interwoven with international ones, and they argued that there was a compelling reason for this. As the league put it, "Our internationalism is not the child of a crazed enthusiasm for empty phrases... but of the need to take preventive measures, to bolster ourselves against the enemy," which they identified as "the imperialism of North America."

Many of Latin America's radical movements at this time were inspired by the recent example of the Mexican Revolution. The new Mexican Constitution of 1917 had nationalised the country's land and natural resources, putting it on a collision course with U.S. companies and landowners.

Others still were energised by the global repercussions of the Russian Revolution. This, of course, included several brand-new communist parties across the region. But at the time, many others in Latin America saw the Bolsheviks as part of a global anti-colonial wave.

Mexico City as an activist hub

My book explores the key role Mexico City played as a gathering point for these different political tendencies.

They included groups ranging from Mexican peasant leagues to the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance, an anti-imperialist movement formed by Peruvian exiles. Many of these organisations converged under the umbrella of the Anti-Imperialist League of the Americas. Founded in Mexico City in 1925, it soon had chapters in a dozen more countries across the region.

Between them, these movements brought into focus the novel features of U.S. power. As the Cuban student leader and communist Julio Antonio Mella saw it in 1925 – at a time when his native country was highly dependent on the U.S. but formally sovereign – the U.S. was distinct. Unlike European empires, it largely refrained from direct control of territories, though it had pressed the Cubans to include in their 1901 constitution a provision allowing it to intervene in the island at will.

In Mella's view, the U.S. was clearly an empire, one that mainly exercised its dominance through commercial or financial pressures. For him, the dollar and Wall Street were as central to U.S. power as the halls of government in Washington, DC.

For Ricardo Paredes, an Ecuadorean doctor who founded the country's Socialist Party in 1926, a new term was required to capture Latin American countries' contradictory position. Formally sovereign, they were not colonies as such. Yet they were economically and politically subordinated to Washington and Wall Street – "dependent countries," as he phrased it in 1928.

For the Peruvian poet Magda Portal, a leading member of the anti-imperialist American Popular Revolutionary Alliance, U.S. dominance played out differently in different parts of Latin America.

In a series of lectures she gave in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic in 1929, Portal divided the region into zones. While countries such as Argentina or Brazil were mainly sites for U.S. investment, Mexico and the Caribbean were regularly subjected to U.S. military force. Or, as Portal put it, "Here imperialism wears no disguise."

Portal concluded her lectures with a phrase that combined her analysis of U.S. dominance with a resonant appeal for unity: "We have a single and great enemy; let us form a single and great union."

United States of resistance?

Yet while there was much Latin American anti-imperialist thinkers could agree on, there were also profound divergences between them. This included questions of strategy as well as issues of principle. What role should different classes play in their movement? How radical a transformation of society were they pushing for? And what kind of state should emerge from it?

Over time, these differences turned into deep rifts that pitted revolutionaries against democratic reformists, internationalists against nationalists, and pro-Soviets against anti-communists. These disagreements played an important role in Latin American politics over the rest of the century. While many of these rifts became especially prominent during the Cold War, they developed out of earlier divisions over how best to counter U.S. dominance.

The anti-imperialist upsurge of the 1920s and '30s was formative for a generation of Latin American radicals. Several of those who entered political life during these years went on to play key roles in major events of the 20th century. Raúl Roa, for example, who served as foreign secretary for Cuba's revolutionary government from 1959 to 1976, was first politicised in the island's anti-imperialist movement of the 1920s.

The men and women whose political visions were formed in the interwar period carried those ideals forward into the Cold War era. In important ways, the 1920s and 1930s laid vital groundwork for later and better-known radical movements.

Past is, of course, not always prologue. It is impossible to predict what the long-term consequences of current U.S. policy in Latin America will be, especially given the rightward tilt that is currently unfolding across the region.

But looking at the region's anti-imperialist traditions does point to one possible outcome: The U.S.'s newly aggressive stance will, sooner rather than later, fuel a resurgence of anti-imperialist sentiment as the organising principle for a new generation of activists.

(Tony Wood is Assistant Professor of History, Modern Latin America, University of Colorado Boulder. This article is republished from The Conversation)

No official order on RTE quota: SC/ST students face hefty fees

The State Budget had said SC/ST students will get free education in the same school for classes 9 and 10 under the RTE Act

Jayanth R.
BENGALURU

Despite the State government announcing in the 2026-27 Budget that Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) students will get free education in the same school for classes 9 and 10 under the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, no official order regarding its implementation has been issued. As a result, parents have alleged that private schools are demanding hefty fees from such students to continue in their schools.

"My daughter, who was enrolled under the RTE in a private school in Kengeri, has passed from class 8 to class 9 this year. The school management is refusing to enrol her in class 9 under the RTE, saying that they have not received any official order from the government in this regard. In addition, they are asking for a fee of ₹1.5 lakh to continue in class 9," said Prakash from Kengeri.

Under the RTE Act-2009, free and compulsory education is provided to students aged 6 to 14, that is, from classes 1 to 8. The government is bearing the fees of students enrolled under the RTE Act in private schools in the State. Some students who have passed class 8 continue in the same schools by paying full fees, while those who cannot pay the fees join other schools.

Educationists and Dalit organisations had appealed to the Chief Minister to continue free and compulsory education up to class 10 for socially, economically, and educationally backward SC/ST students under the RTE Act. FILE PHOTO

Budget announcement

Educationists and Dalit organisations had appealed to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to continue free and compulsory education up to class 10 for socially, economically, and educationally backward SC/ST students under the RTE Act.

Mr. Siddaramaiah then announced in the State Budget for 2026-27 that ₹19 crore would be allocated for SC/ST students to continue their education in the same school until class 10 under the RTE Act, 2009, and the Social Welfare Department would bear the educational expenses of the students.

Enrollment in schools for the year 2026-27 has begun across the State and the School Education Department is also finalising the RTE admission processes.

Denial of admission

However, parents have alleged that private schools are denying admission to SC/ST students under the RTE to classes 9 and 10 as no official order has been issued by either the Social Welfare Department or the School Education Department so far. "I have requested the school management to continue my daughter's education under the RTE as announced in the Budget, but they are not responding. As a daily wage worker, I cannot pay the fees of a private school. They have given me a deadline till the end of April for school enrollment," lamented Lalita.

'Order soon'

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Rakesh Kumar K., Commissioner, Social Welfare Department, said, "The file regarding continuing education of SC/ST students in the same school till class 9 and 10 under the RTE Act is in the final stage and an order will be issued soon. In addition, a letter will be written to the Commissioner of the School Education Department to issue an order not to force any SC/ST students enrolled under the RTE to get Transfer Certificate (TC) and move to another school or to force their parents to pay complete fees."

He also said that students who have already taken a TC and enrolled in other schools for classes 9 and 10 would also be allowed to continue their studies in their previous school again.

Vishnu Sai Theja emerges State topper with 99.99 percentile in JEE-2026 (Mains) Session-2

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A. Vishnu Sai Theja was the only student from Karnataka who secured 99.99 percentile in the Joint Entrance Examination-2026 (JEE Mains), Session-2, Paper-1 (BE/BTech) and emerged as the State topper.

He had got the State topper tag with the same percentile in the JEE 2026 (Mains) Session-1, Paper-1, held in January 2026.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) announced the result of JEE (Mains)-2026, Session-2 of Paper 1 for the entrance to professional courses like BE/BTech in premier technical institutions like Indian Institute Technologies (IITs), on Monday.

This time too, no candidate from Karnataka has secured 100 percentile.

A student of Narayana CO-Kaveri Bhavan, off Sarjapur Road, Theja has got 28th place among the 53 toppers' list.

"There is no particular number of hours that I designated for studies. It was an integrated learning for me as I studied the usual class 12 syllabus along with the JEE Mains and Advanced exam. I burnt the midnight oil and solved as many mock tests as possible to achieve this result. I aim to get All India Rank (AIR) within 100 in the JEE (Advanced), so that I get admissions into IIT-Bombay or IIT-Madras. I also aim to study Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence," said Theja.

A. Vishnu Sai Theja

Another student, Adarsh Kumar Behera, from Karnataka, secured 99.99 percentile and emerged the second topper in the Scheduled Caste (SC) category list.

This time, a total of 26 candidates secured 100 percentile score. Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, with five students each, topped the list of students scoring 100 percentile. Following this were Delhi (NCT)- three, and two students each from Haryana and Maharashtra who scored 100 percentile marks.

He had got the State topper tag with the same percentile in the JEE 2026 (Mains) Session-1, Paper-1, held in January 2026

The JEE (Mains)-2026 Session 2 was conducted at 584 unique examination centres in 319 cities (including 15 cities outside India in Manama, Doha City, Muscat, Riyadh, Sharjah, Singapore, Kuwait, Kuala Lumpur, Kathmandu, Abu Dhabi, West Java, Washington, Lagos, Munich and Dammam) from April 2 to 8.

10,34,330 appeared

Among 11,10,904 candidates registered for the examination, a total of 10,34,330 appeared.

The exam was held in 13 languages, including Kannada.

Threat call made in name of Bishnoi gang to Maharashtra RTO; case registered in city

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

An unidentified man posing as a member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang allegedly made death threats to a Maharashtra Regional Transport Officer (RTO), prompting the police to register a case at Soladevavahalli Police Station in Bengaluru on April 15.

Based on the complaint filed by Prasad Shivadas Nalavade, an RTO officer from Thane, Maharashtra, the Soladevanahalli police have registered an FIR against the unknown accused.

A zero FIR was initially registered in Maharashtra and later transferred to the Bengaluru police based on jurisdiction.

According to the complaint, Mr. Nalavade had recently initiated action against auto drivers allegedly operating with fake permits over the past decade, following directions from senior officials. On April 12, while he was in Bengaluru to attend a cricket event organised by the All India Federation of Motor Vehicle Department Technical Executive Officers' Association, he received a phone call, which reportedly lasted for three minutes.

The caller claimed affiliation with the Bishnoi gang and accused Mr. Nalavade of harassing poor autorickshaw drivers and shielding certain agents involved in irregularities.

When Mr. Nalavade asked him to visit the office and provide details, the caller refused and instead issued threats. The caller allegedly warned the officer to increase his security, stating that the matter had "reached Delhi" and that Mr. Nalavade would have to change his decision.

The police have registered a case and initiated further investigation.

DCRE SP alleges misuse of power by some IPS officers

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Allegations of harassment within the Police Department have emerged after a Superintendent of Police (SP) from the Directorate of Civil Rights Enforcement (DCRE) wrote to the Director-General of Police (DGP) seeking permission to expose alleged misconduct by certain IPS officers.

In the letter, the SP alleged that some IPS officers in Karnataka have been misusing their authority towards subordinate staff. The communication further claimed that a few officers from outside the State were allegedly targeting Kannada-origin officers and misusing their positions to suppress them.

The SP requested the DGP to facilitate a meeting with the Chief Minister, Home Minister, and Home Secretary to present detailed evidence regarding alleged harassment, abuse of power, and injustice within the department.

In a separate development, Inspector Srinivas of the West DCRE police station released a video accusing senior officers, including the SP and a Deputy SP, of harassment and mental pressure.

In the video, he appealed to the State government to intervene and address the issue. Authorities are yet to issue an official response, and further inquiry is expected.

IISc launches AI challenge for early detection of cognitive decline

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Centre for Brain Research (CBR) at IISc has launched an AI challenge to advance early detection of cognitive decline.

The CBR has invited researchers from institutions across the country to develop predictive models using large-scale brain aging datasets, including longitudinal cohort data from India. The six-month challenge is being held in partnership with the Alzheimer's Disease Data Initiative (AD Data Initiative) and Microsoft Research India (MSR India).

"Early detection of the onset of cognitive decline can lead to scalable and affordable intervention strategies that can benefit senior citizens in the country. The use of AI could be a potential game changer to unravel hidden connections in our understanding of cognitive decline. This challenge is about the future and the CBR's commitment to transforming the lives of millions using discovery and innovation. We invite India's sharpest minds to join the CBR's mission to understand and improve aging brain health," said K.V.S. Hari, Director, Centre for Brain Research.

The challenge is open for researchers and innovators based in India. GETTY IMAGES

The challenge is open for researchers and innovators based in India to develop AI models to predict the development of mild cognitive impairment or dementia and understand disease progression.

"Our goal is to push the boundaries of our understanding of brain aging and building scalable solutions to address the issues of dementia and related brain aging challenges facing our society. The possibilities that are created with the AI revolution need to be applied in all aspects of research in this space, be it better predictions, better research and better treatments becoming available," said Senapathy Kris Gopalakrishnan, co-founder of Infosys, chairman of Axilor Ventures and trustee of Pratiksha Trust.

Submissions are open from April 20 to May 20 and will undergo a rigorous review by expert jury members. Winners will be awarded combinations of cash prize and research grants worth ₹2 crore to further develop their proposed solutions.

Future of India's diagnostic innovation discussed at C-CAMP's conclave

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP) hosted the first edition of National Diagnostics Conclave on its Bengaluru campus, where the Indigenisation of Diagnostics (InDx) Guidance Manual was released.

Aims

According to the report, National Diagnostics Catapult or NDxC, the InDx programme anchored by C-CAMP, will further look at strengthening pandemic preparedness, aligning with national health missions, and enable State-level diagnostics deployments in the coming days.

The manual also highlights key design principles and outlines India's regulatory pathway for in vitro diagnostic devices.

"The C-CAMP InDx initiative was conceptualised with support from the office of the Principal Scientific Adviser, reflecting a national vision for diagnostics self-reliance. This programme has brought together diagnostic manufacturers and India's leading research centres of excellence onto a single platform, enabling the identification and bridging of key regulatory and R&D gaps," said Parvinder Maini, Scientific Secretary, Office of Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.

C-CAMP conceptualised and anchored the Indigenisation of Diagnostics or InDx, in 2020, as a nationwide initiative towards convergence, capacity-building and manufacturing scale-up of all stakeholders with indigenous molecular diagnostics.

Students flag 7,220 traffic violations in six months on ASTraM

Chetan B.C.
BENGALURU

Within just six months of the Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) introducing a violation-flagging feature on ASTraM that allows college students to report traffic violations, a whopping 7,220 rule-breakers have been flagged by students, data shows.

The initiative, launched in September 2025 to instil traffic discipline among students and expand enforcement, now has over 1,000 students registered. The majority of violations reported by students include wrong-way driving and riding without helmets, among other infractions.

The majority of violations reported by students include wrong-way driving and riding without helmets, among other infractions.

The positive impact of the move is reflected in the data, with violations flagged by students from each educational institution recording an average accuracy of 70% to 80%. Some reports were discarded due to poor image quality. Of the 7,220 violations flagged by students, 5,201 (71.95%) have been found to be genuine. A total of 1,355 were rejected, while 672 are yet to be validated, according to ASTraM data.

The application also features a leaderboard that ranks users based on the number of violations reported. Geetha M., a student from a girls' college in Basavanagudi, has flagged 2,118 violations around her college. Of these, 1,479 reports were approved and violators booked, while 179 are yet to be validated. A modest 460 reports were rejected.

A traffic police source familiar with the developments said ASTraM includes a feature called BTP-Aarohan Police Marshals, which enables students to register and obtain login credentials. Once logged in, students can capture images of commuters violating traffic rules and upload them through the app.

"They are provided with a drop-down menu listing different types of traffic violations. After uploading the image, students can select the violation and submit it," the officer said.

According to the officer, once a submission is made, a team at the Traffic Management Centre (TMC) reviews each image to verify its accuracy and confirm whether the violation is genuine. "We have similar manual checks for our traffic cameras to improve accuracy. Even if there is an error on the part of the student or during TMC verification, an image is available in the system, allowing the alleged violator to challenge the flagging," the officer explained.

The initiative is a joint effort of the traffic police and the Aarohan Foundation, which already works with the Bengaluru City Police to raise awareness about drugs and cybercrime among college students.

The foundation has introduced the concept of police marshals, operating similarly to clubs such as environmental or cultural clubs in educational institutions. Students who join the initiative are designated as police marshals.

Vinay A.G., director of Aarohan Foundation, told *The Hindu* that there were about 14,000 marshals, with around 1,000 participating in the pilot phase by reporting traffic violations. "We plan to increase registrations for ASTram in the coming days, as many students have shown interest. This initiative serves a dual purpose, as it raises awareness among students while also helping the police book violators," Mr. Vinay said.

Timings
BENGALURU

TUESDAY, APR. 21
RISE 06:04 SET 18:33
RISE 09:19 SET 22:49

WEDNESDAY, APR. 22
RISE 06:03 SET 18:33
RISE 10:23 SET 23:50

THURSDAY, APR. 23
RISE 06:03 SET 18:33
RISE 11:28 SET 00:00

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	34	15
Mysuru	36	21
Bengaluru	36	24

Bengaluru Today
36°C The weather will be dry. Day will be hot and uneasy. Night will be pleasant.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
37°C Morning will be pleasant. Day will be hot and uneasy. Night also will be pleasant. Dry weather to occur.

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Published by Nirmala Lakshman at No 19&21, Bhagwan Mahaveer Road, Bengaluru-560001 and Printed by C. Sridhar at Plot No. 13-D, Bommasandra-Jigani Link Road, KIADB Industrial Area, Bommasandra, Anekal Taluk, Bengaluru-560099 on behalf of THG PUBLISHING PVT. LTD., Chennai-600002. Editor: Suresh Nambath Chandrasekar (Responsible for selection of news under the PRP Act).
ISSN 0971 - 751X

BUILDING BLOCKS

From light waves to quantum physics: the science behind smart washbasins

Invisible infrared waves are emitted by IR LEDs and detected by photodiodes to enable devices like remotes, automatic washbasins to function; this 'magic' is actually optics and condensed matter physics in action, where invisible light interacts with sensors, electrons to create automatic responses

Adhip Agarwala

Even though phones now provide an inexhaustible source of entertainment, going to a nearby movie theatre to watch a film still has its own charm. The shared loud laughter, the annoying phone calls of neighbours, and even the endless paan-masala ads featuring fitness-enthusiastic Bollywood actors remind us of simpler times when only humans were sometimes called intelligent.

But even though movie theatres have transformed from having inedible food to unaffordable food, a few things have changed for good. For example, one of the most magical things in recent multiplexes, even if you ignore the thousand-crore-movies and the ear-wrenching Dolby surround sound, is the humble-looking washbasins. Incidentally, when you place your hand below the tap, it becomes self-aware and offers you water.

In fact, multiplexes (and even airports and metro stations) now seem to be aware. Doors open automatically, paused escalators start moving, and with a wave of your hand, sanitisers, dryers, and soap dispensers activate.

So, have you ever wondered how a washbasin detects you? In fact, even before magical wands became popular, you had some in your homes. Each of your remotes – be it for TV or AC – works like one. You point it from a distance, press a button, and suddenly the TV or AC comes to life.

Hiding behind all of this non-Harry-Potter-universe magic is, as always, some beautiful piece of physics. And this time, it is of a unique type of invisible light.

GETTY IMAGES

What exactly is a wave?

Before we go on to the invisible, the first natural question to ask is what is light? And the short answer is – light is a wave.

A wave is a disturbance that moves periodically, like a child on a swing. Now imagine a large playground with a thousand swings, all tied together. If you push just one swing, the disturbance travels through all of them until even the last swing starts moving. This moving disturbance is what we call a wave. Please note that no kids have been harmed in conducting this thought experiment.

A wave has a frequency, which depends on how fast the swing moves back and forth. If it does it once in a second, we call it one Hertz. Instead, if it does it 1,000 times in a second, we call it 1 kilohertz.

We see waves all the time – in ripples on water when a stone is thrown, or in sound when a car suddenly honks behind us in traffic. Those are sound waves. But light waves are a bit strange.

The reason is simple. In water waves, it is the water that moves after getting disturbed. Similarly, in sound waves, it is the air that has been disturbed by that car (also may be your mental peace).

But what moves in a light wave? After all, sunlight travels from the sun to earth through outer space, which has nothing to move. Light moves through a vacuum.

Invisible light

Light belongs to the family of electromagnetic (EM) waves – a wave in which electric and magnetic fields oscillate. An electric field is generated by a battery, and a magnetic field by magnets. But here they are generated simultaneously and have to change with time. In nature, they can be generated in multiple ways, one of which is by electrons inside an atom when they jiggle close to the nucleus. The faster the electrons jiggle, more is the frequency of the EM wave they create.

When such waves fall on our eyes, we can see them – but only a very tiny window of such frequencies. These frequencies are between 400 and 800 terahertz. Just like a kilo-Hz means a jiggle 1000 or 10^3 times in a second, a terahertz means 10^15 times in a second – really, really fast. These ranges of EM waves are termed visible light.

In all of physics, the study of light and its properties remains one of the beautiful fields of study. This area of study is optics.

So, continuing, even if we do not 'see' all frequency waves, it does not mean they are not present. In fact, we are drenched in electromagnetic waves of various types. Radio waves (our FM radio) cannot be seen, but our radio transistors can pick them up. Similarly, microwaves are another type of electromagnetic wave.

Even within the light we do see, the different colours – from red to blue – have slightly different frequencies. The frequency of red is slightly lower than that of blue. The kind of waves that give the remote magic are called Infrared (IR) waves. Here, "infra" means lower than, because their frequency is just below that of red light. These waves, although like visible light, are actually 'invisible'. That is, our human eyes cannot see them.

Pick up a remote closest to you, maybe belonging to a (slightly older style) TV or an AC. If you see the front end, you may find a tiny bulb. This is actually an LED – light-emitting diode. It means it emits some light when switched on. Think of it like a torch. Now, if you press the on button, you may not see anything glowing and wonder if this LED is really working. Turns out, it is 'actually glowing', just that your eyes can't see it. Many of our modern smartphone cameras are sensitive to it. The other day, some students here taught me that if you point your phone camera at the LED and press the on button on the remote, you may actually 'see' this IR light. Did you?

Well, in fact, if our eyes were sensitive to IR rays, this world would look very different to us. We could also look very different to each other since our bodies also create IR waves. If you want to see how we would look, you can go to a website called cool-cosmos. This is run by IPAC, a physics centre at the California Institute of Technology, created by physics teachers to learn about IR waves. They have an IR Zoo, which has pictures of many animals and how they would appear in IR.

Now, while you may agree that a remote creates IR waves, the TV or the AC needs to know about them. Here comes the second important actor – the sensor.

Sensors as switches

You may think of a sensor as a railway crossing manager. It allows the train to pass if it gets the correct torch signal from far. These sensors are called photodiodes. They conduct electricity if light falls on it. The torch is the IR-LED, the train is of electrons in any electrical circuit, and the crossing manager is the photodiode. When the remote is switched on (the LED is on), the IR light falls on the photodiode. The photodiode now allows for the current to pass and your TV or AC switches on. Otherwise, it is in the OFF state, and the current does not reach.

Just like for a train to pass, the manager needs to know which colour torch is the 'green signal'. Similarly, the sensor is only sensitive to the IR signals of the specific remote. Otherwise, your TV remote could switch on the AC and vice versa. You may now wonder how one creates the specific sensor. That is a different story, but a marvelous amount of material science and engineering goes behind this.

The physics subject which deals with the " why" behind all of this, is called condensed-matter-physics.

How washbasins detect hands

So what really happens in that multiplex washbasin?

Here, an IR LED is kept and a sensor is placed just next to it. It is like having a torch that you are holding and pointing it in a vast dark space. Since you are holding the torch and are pointing it in front, the light will not directly fall into your eye. But now imagine that suddenly a big mirror comes in front of you. That mirror will reflect the torchlight from your hands right into your own eye and you will be able to tell – "Aha! A mirror must have appeared!"

Something similar happens when you place your hand in the basin. Usually, the IR light coming from the LED does not fall on the sensor and the water is not running. But when you place your hand, your hand reflects the IR light and now it falls on the sensor. The sensor thinks of it like a "green signal" and switches on the circuit. This circuit is tied to water and gets the water running!

Quantum mechanics

You may still wonder, how does a sensor work? How do electrons know the IR wave? How does the LED work? Much of this requires learning of quantum mechanics, condensed matter physics, and optics, something which one is taught in physics courses, for example, here at IIT Kanpur. If you are interested, you should consider studying physics.

So next time, when you go to watch a movie in a multiplex, and find that the multi-crore movie did not stand up to your expectations – do not be disheartened. Enjoy the ads and ambience, and then take a break to use the washbasin.

Another movie would be at play for you – with ultra-modern sensors, quantum electrons, invisible IR light, and four centuries of physics just to create the perfect magical moment.

(Adhip Agarwala is an Assistant Professor of Physics at IIT Kanpur)

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

"Haven't seen you for a while. Where have you been?"

"It's been so hot. I don't step out of the house till 6:00 in the evening."

"Yes, the weather has been terrible, hasn't it? How about having dinner with me at the new restaurant tonight?"

"No, thanks. I went there with some of my friends. I had a bowl of soup and some noodles. It was really expensive."

"I see. By the way, the 'ow' in 'b..o..w..l' is pronounced like ....."

".....I know, I know. It's pronounced like the 'ow' in 'owl', 'fowl', and...."

"....no, it isn't. The 'ow' rhymes with the 'o' in words like 'gold', 'bold' and 'old'."

"Really? That's interesting. Since we are talking about pronunciation, how is 's..e..w' pronounced?"

"It's pronounced like the word 'so'."

"But I have heard a lot of people pronouncing the 'ew' like the 'oo' in 'fool', 'cool', and 'pool'."

"I know! But the word is pronounced the same way as 'so'."

"If 's..e..w' is pronounced like the word 'so', then how is 's..o..w' pronounced?"

"It depends on which word you are talking about?"

"What do you mean by which word? I am talking about the planting of seeds."

"....oh that 'sow'. It's pronounced like 's..e..w' and 's..o'."

"So you have three words which are pronounced the same way! 'S..o', 's..e..w', and 's..o..w' are pronounced exactly alike."

"Not always. You see, a female pig is also spelt s..o..w. But the 'ow', in this case, is pronounced like the 'ow' in 'how', 'cow', and 'now'."

"I see."

"How is your father's case coming along? Do you think Venkat is really going to help him win the case? Rumour has it that he is not a man of his word."

"What does it mean?"

"It means someone who does what he/she promises to do."

"Many of my classmates say that our Principal is not a man of his words."

"The expression is a 'man of his word'. You cannot say 'man of his words'."

"I see. My principal is not a man of his word."

"My boss isn't a man of his word either."

"One cannot expect a politician to be a man of his word."

"Are you saying that my boss is a politician?"

"No, no! I was just giving an example."

"Tell me, why did your father go to Venkat of all people?"

"Some of my father's friends told him that Venkat is well versed with the rules and regulations of the...."

"....well versed in."

"What?"

"You don't say 'well versed with', but 'well versed in'. Do you know what the expression 'well versed in', means?"

"I think so. Doesn't it mean to know a lot about something?"

"When you are well versed in something, you know a great deal about a particular subject. It could also mean that you are good at doing something."

"My Principal goes around telling everyone that he is well versed in English literature. But he doesn't know a thing."

"We are looking for someone who is well versed in automobile engineering."

"I am looking for someone who is well versed in physics and chemistry."

"Why?"

"I want him to write my exams for me!"

Published in The Hindu on May 9, 2000

Word of the day

Jeer:
showing your contempt by derision

Synonyms: taunt, mock, insult

Usage: *Even after the jeers, he continued his speech.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/jeer

International Phonetic Alphabet: /dʒɪə/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Test your knowledge of the Natale di Roma, the legendary foundation of the Eternal city, a mix of myth, ancient Roman tradition and centuries of evolving celebrations

Prathmesh Kher

QUESTION 1
According to tradition, on what exact date was Rome founded?

QUESTION 2
Which legendary figure is credited with the founding of Rome?

QUESTION 3
What animal is said to have suckled Romulus and his twin brother Remus as infants?

QUESTION 4
Which traditional Roman chronological term, meaning "from the founding of the City", originates from this date?

QUESTION 5
The twins Romulus and Remus were mythically said to be descendants of which Trojan hero?

Visual Question: The coin shown here was issued by the Roman usurper Pacatianus and bears the inscription "1001". What does this number signify in Roman chronology?
PUBLIC DOMAIN

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Name the U.S. president who coined the phrase 'United Nations' in a 1942 Allied declaration. **Ans: Franklin D. Roosevelt**

2. Which are the two languages, from among the UN's six official languages, that are not the national language of any permanent Security Council member? **Ans: Spanish and Arabic**

3. The X in 1956 triggered the first 'Emergency Special Session' of the UN General Assembly. This is a procedure reserved for when the Security Council enters a deadlock, in this case caused by two permanent members vetoing resolutions against their own military action. **Ans: Suez Crisis**

4. Name the principal judicial organ of the UN. It rules on disputes between states rather than prosecuting individuals, which is a distinction that sets it apart from the International Criminal Court. **Ans: International Court of Justice**

5. Which country cast the Security Council's first-ever veto, in 1946, on a question about the withdrawal of foreign troops from the Levant? **Ans: Soviet Union/Russia**

Visual: Name the body formerly hosted at these two buildings and which was intimately related to the birth of the United Nations. **Ans: League of Nations**

Early Birds: K.N. Viswanathan | Erfanally Oosmany | Tito Shiladitya | Sonali Das | Mohan Lal Patel

Stress mounts as eligible police constables face transfer delays

Despite meeting criteria, several constables, particularly from the 2016 batch, are not yet given transfers

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A growing sense of distress is being reported among civil police constables in Bengaluru, as many eligible personnel continue to be denied inter-district transfers even after completing 10 years of service in a single unit.

Mohan Kumar Danappa, member of the Karnataka State Police Complaints Authority, wrote to the Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department, recently, highlighting the issue and urging immediate intervention.

In his letter, Mr. Danappa pointed out that under earlier norms, constables were eligible for transfer to their home districts after three years of service. However, subsequent amendments extended this period to 10 years.

Despite fulfilling the revised criteria, several constables – particularly from the 2016 batch – are yet to be granted transfers under the general category. He noted that while provisions introduced through the KSP portal in March 2023 allowed transfers on specific grounds such as spouse cases and ex-servicemen categories, many personnel under the general category have been left out. "This has created an imbalance and a sense of discrimination among the staff," he said in his letter.

Reports suggest that the issue has already led to frustration within the force, with some personnel expressing their grievances on social media and in representations to the government. FILE PHOTO

The letter further highlights the human cost of the delay. Many constables, often posted far from their native districts, are struggling to care for ageing parents and families. Due to staff shortage, leave is also reportedly becoming difficult to obtain, adding to mental and emotional stress. Mr. Danappa observed that some personnel had even foregone promotions multiple times in anticipation of securing transfers closer to home. "Despite sacrificing career progression and meeting all eligibility conditions, they continue to be denied transfers," he said.

Grievance raised

Reports suggest that the issue has already led to frustration within the force, with some personnel expressing their grievances on social media and in representations to the government. In extreme cases, families of constables have reportedly written to authorities expressing severe distress.

Delay due to shortage

Sources within the Police Department, however, attribute the delay in transfers to a shortage of personnel. A significant proportion of constables are said to be from North Karnataka, and large-scale transfers could lead to staffing gaps in Bengaluru and other southern districts.

Mr. Danappa has urged the government to consider the matter on humanitarian grounds and take the necessary steps to ensure transparent and fair transfers. He emphasised that addressing the issue is crucial not only for the welfare of personnel but also for maintaining efficiency and morale within the police force.

Disaster management training held

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A five-day 'Disaster Management Emergency Operations and Pre-Mock Exercise Training' held in Bengaluru from April 8 to 12 brought together personnel from multiple national agencies, armed forces, metro rail corporations, and State departments as part of a larger national preparedness initiative. It was organised by Tejus Disaster Management & Mitigation Centre in collaboration with Kristu Jayanti (deemed-to-be-university).

Elderly man killed in accident

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 61-year-old man, who was riding a two-wheeler, was killed after being knocked down by a BMTC bus on Madhure Road in the limits of the Chikkabanavara Traffic Police Station on Monday.

The victim has been identified as Nagaraju, a resident of Basaveshwar Nagar. According to the police, the incident occurred around 10.45 a.m. Nagaraju sustained severe injuries and was rushed to a hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead. The police have registered a case and issued a notice to the bus driver.

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SRI SHANKARA JAYANTI MAHOTSAV

CELEBRATING THE BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PEERLESS PRECEPTOR

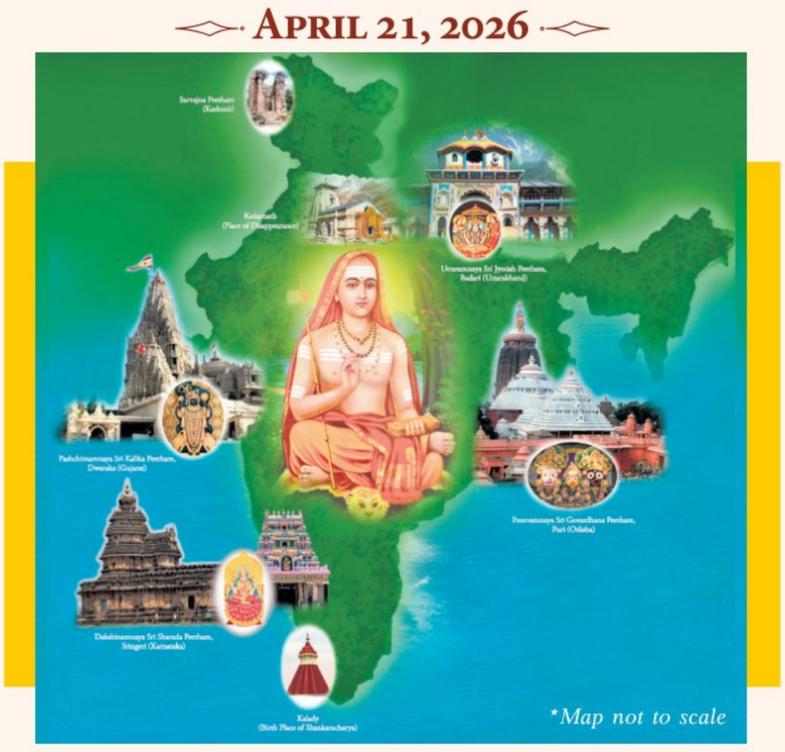
JAGADGURU SRI ADI SHANKARACHARYA

Today, Shankara Jayanti, marking the anniversary of Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya's birth, is celebrated throughout the world by followers of Sanatana Dharma.

A Legacy Beyond Time

Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism as it is known today, is vibrant today largely due to the efforts of the Avatar of Bhagavan Parameshwara, Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya the great philosopher saint, who lived over twelve centuries ago. Rarely in history has a single individual shaped the spiritual, cultural, and philosophical fabric of a civilisation so profoundly. Sri Adi Shankaracharya's influence continues to guide millions, inspiring seekers toward knowledge, harmony, and liberation.

VAISHAKHA SHUKLA PANCHAMI
APRIL 21, 2026



KALADY — THE SACRED BIRTHPLACE OF THE JAGADGURU

A Sacred Landmark Rediscovered

Though the life and achievements of Sri Adi Shankaracharya remain eternal, his birthplace had faded from public memory for centuries. It was in the late 19th century that Sri Sacchidananda Shivabhinava Narasimha Bharati Mahaswamiji (33rd Shankaracharya of Sringeri Sharada Peetham) rediscovered Kalady and restored its rightful place in India's spiritual map.

Where History And Divinity Meet

This remarkable rediscovery was made possible through the spiritual insight of the Mahaswamiji, supported by the dedicated efforts of erstwhile rulers, scholars, administrators, historians, and devotees of the time.

The places associated with the early life of Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya — from the time of his parents, Aryamba and Shivaguru, to the extraordinary events of his childhood — have been identified in and around Kalady. These findings are rooted in the authentic text Madhaviya Shankara Digvijaya, composed by Sri Vidyaranya Mahaswamiji (12th Shankaracharya of Sringeri Sharada Peetham).

Glimpses Of A Divine Childhood

In accordance with the Namboodiri tradition, his mother, Aryamba, who gave birth to Sri Adi Shankaracharya at Kalady, continued to reside there after the passing of Shivaguru. The young Shankara studied at a nearby Gurukula, where he composed the famed Kanakadhara Stotram, blessing a poor household with lasting prosperity — an episode that continues to inspire faith and devotion. The young prodigious Shankara served his elderly mother and turned away the wealth presented by the Kerala king. It was from his birthplace at Kalady in Kerala that the young Shankara, aged only 8, set out on his remarkable journey to study Vedanta under the eminent Guru, Sri Govinda Bhagavatpadacharya.

Scan for further Information, participation in contests and to widen your Knowledge of Dharma and Sri Adi Shankaracharya

NATIONAL & DHARMIC INTEGRATION — SRI ADI SHANKARACHARYA's TIMELESS VISION

Reconnecting a Diverse Nation Through Spiritual Unity

India's rich spiritual heritage has long encouraged pilgrimage and devotion. Yet, it was the great philosopher-saint Sri Adi Shankaracharya who revitalised this tradition, traveling across the entire nation three times in his 32 year lifetime. His journeys were not merely spiritual — they were a powerful mission to unify the country. With great foresight, Sri Adi Shankaracharya established four Amnaya Peethams in the four directions of India.

Among these, the Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharada Peetham established at Sringeri has been adorned by an unbroken succession of illustrious Acharyas right from Sri Adi Shankaracharya's direct disciple, Sri Sureshwaracharya. The lives of the Acharyas and their efforts to continue the mission of Sri Adi Shankaracharya are remarkable and unique. Following the guidelines outlined in the Mathamnaya Stotra for a head of the Amnaya Peetham, the Shankaracharyas of the Sringeri Sharada Peetham by their own conduct and by their discourses, teach dharmic tenets, impart Vedantic wisdom and also instill in us the need for paying gratitude to Sri Adi Shankaracharya.

Besides the four Amnaya Peethams, many smaller Shankarite institutions or Shakha Maths came to be established by the later Shankaracharyas starting from Sri Vidyaranya Mahaswamiji (the 12th Sringeri Shankaracharya, renowned for being instrumental in the founding of the Vijayanagar empire).

Reviving Sacred Traditions

During his travels, Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya restored temple worship and reestablished sacred Murtis in key pilgrimage centres like Badrinath, Jagannath Puri etc. and Srichakra Yantras in Kollur, Kanchipuram etc. At Sringeri, He consecrated Sri Sharadamba, the divinity of Knowledge on a Srichakra and established the southern Amnaya Peetham. Sri Shankaracharya demonstrated the importance of women in our tradition, as evidenced by the appointment of Mandana Mishra's wife, Ubhaya Bharati to adjudicate in the famous debate.

Unity Beyond Regions

To strengthen national integration His actions bridged regional differences and fostered a shared spiritual identity. For instance, He appointed:

- Kerala Nambudiris to serve at Badrinath in the north
- Maharashtra priests, after receiving sacred Deeksha from the Sringeri Shankaracharya, to conduct worship at Sri Ramanathaswamy Temple in Rameswaram.
- Padmapadacharya from the south as the Peethadhipati of the Dwaraka Peetham in the west.
- Sureshwaracharya from the north as the Peethadhipati of the southern Peetham at Sringeri

The Universal Message

At a time when sectarian conflicts were prevalent, Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya promoted harmony by reviving the Panchayatana Puja system and worship of six major paths or Shanmata.

The Jagadguru emphasised that true liberation comes from realising Brahman, the ultimate Reality. By transcending divisions and embracing unity, individuals can achieve lasting peace and freedom from suffering.

GRATITUDE TO THE UNIVERSAL PRECEPTOR

Honouring the Tradition that Preserves Timeless Wisdom

Offering gratitude to Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya was systematised by the remarkable contributions of the 33rd Shankaracharya of Sringeri, Sri Sacchidananda Shivabhinava Narasimha Bharati Mahaswamiji in the late 19th century. He directed that Shankara Jayanti be observed over five days across the world—by Hindus and all admirers of Sri Adi Shankaracharya, transcending boundaries of nationality and religion. Today these celebrations are held not only in Bharat, but also across continents including Europe, Australia, Africa and the Americas.

Under the Mahaswamiji's direction, the complete works of Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya were first compiled and made accessible, ensuring that every sincere spiritual seeker can benefit from this timeless wisdom.

SRI SHANKARA JAYANTI 2026 — GRAND CELEBRATIONS

A Sacred Gathering of Devotion, Learning, and Tradition

Dakshinamnaya Sringeri Sharada Peethadheeshwara, Jagadguru Shankaracharya Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamiji and Jagadguru Shankaracharya Sri Sri Vidhushekhara Bharati Mahaswamiji will celebrate the auspicious Sri Shankara Jayanti of the Paraabhava Samvatsara from April 18 to April 21, 2026 at Sringeri. Similarly Kalady, the birth place of Sri Adi Shankaracharya and hundreds of branches of Sringeri and other Amnaya Peethams, various Maths as well as the central and state governments, and various spiritual centres across the world celebrate this day. The celebrations will feature a rich blend of sacred rituals and spiritual discourses, Veda Parayana, Vakyartha Sabha, special Pujas at Sri Adi Shankaracharya temples, Madhaviya Shankara Vijaya Parayana, Poorna Arati at the river Poorna, Teppotsava, Rathotsava, grand procession etc.

Devotees, scholars, and spiritual seekers from across the country are invited to participate in this divine celebration — honouring the timeless teachings of Adi Shankaracharya and preserving India's rich spiritual heritage.

Join the celebration. Experience the tradition. Be part of a living legacy.

SRI SRI JAGADGURU SHANKARACHARYA MAHASAMSTHANAM
Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharada Peetham, Sringeri - 577 139.
www.sringeri.net

-Advt.

Court slams police officers for false testimony in Kulkarni case

Court calls conduct a 'cavalier' act that erodes public trust in justice system; it also notes the irony that the State's police — recognised as highly competent and efficient — has been made to 'bear the heat' of misconduct by some of its own officers

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A special court of sessions for criminal cases against former and present MPs and MLAs has made scathing observations against three police officers for openly admitting that they had tendered "false evidence" under oath before the magistrate in the murder case involving Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni. The court called the action by the police officers a "cavalier" act that erodes public trust in the justice system.

The court noted the irony that the State's police – nationally recognised as highly competent and efficient – has been made to "bear the heat" of misconduct by some of its own officers.

Blatant confession

While praising the force for its bravery, courage, and dedication, Santhosh Gajanan Bhat, judge of the special court, expressed dismay that these individuals blatantly confessed to lying in court. "Such an act of tendering false evidence cannot be tolerated," the court observed, emphasising that the administration of justice is the basic edifice of society.

The special court on April 15 convicted Vinay Kulkarni and 16 others for murdering BJP leader Yogeshgouda Goudar in 2016.

The court called for punitive action to prevent future blunders that would damage the public's faith in judicial proceedings while ordering registration of a perjury case against the three police officers - Shivananda Chalavadi, Babu Katagi, and Shankaragouda Basanagouda Patil.

Quoting from book "Raja Dharma with lessons on Raja Neeti" written by M. Rama Jois (former chief justice of High Court of Punjab and Haryana, and former governor of Jharkhand and Bihar) the court reminded: "Dharma protects those who protect it; those who destroy Dharma get destroyed."

Turned hostile

The three police officers had given statement before the magistrate under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure indicting involvement of accused persons and other aspects but during the trial, these police officers, who were prosecution witnesses, had turned hostile by stating that they had given 'false evidence' before the magistrate court owing to "pressure" from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) as an officer of the CBI was present during the recording of their statements by the magistrate.

However, the court refused to accept their allegation of "pressurised" by presence of its officer during recording of their statement by the magistrate by taking note of the statement of Anil Kumar, who worked as a system assistant in the magistrate court, who had stated that video conferencing (VC) was conducted by the concerned court as per the procedure and he has deposed that no persons were present at the time of recording the evidence through VC and only witnesses and coordinators were permitted at remote point of the witness.

Also, the court pointed out that none of the three witnesses police officers, who were all educated, had thought it fit to complain to their higher authorities or at least even to the court about the alleged 'threat' given by CBI.

Taken for granted

"It is disheartening to note that the police officers concerned have taken the court and judicial system for granted and have deposed in a reckless manner," the court also observed.

The court also made similar observations while ordering registration of perjury case against other private individuals – Dattatreya Gudaganti, Anand Irappa Uddannavar, Vinayaka Binjiyavar, Mohan Echarappa Mulmuttal, Vivekananda Dalawai, Natraj Sarj Desai and Vijay Kulkarni, a brother of Vinay Kulkarni, who too had turned hostile during trial citing "pressure" from CBI.

Congress leader Vinay Kulkarni being taken for a health check-up after his arrest by the CBI in 2020. FILE PHOTO

Now, a section of Muslim leadership defends Cong. action against two MLCs

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Congress is facing factionalism among Muslim leaders after the bypolls to Davangere South Assembly constituency. FILE PHOTO

Amid the row over action against Muslim leaders within the Congress that one section fears threatens the voter base of the party, another section appears to believe that the action was necessary, and that a "misleading campaign" is being run to portray that the grand old party is acting against the minority community.

The Congress is facing factionalism among Muslim leaders after the bypolls to Davangere South Assembly constituency where the party did not nominate a Muslim, despite pressure from the community leaders. So far, three-time MLC Abdul Jabbar has been suspended on charges of anti party activities while the Chief Minister's political secretary Naseer Ahmed has been sacked. He, however, continues to be MLC.

Housing Minister B.Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan has also been accused of being complicit with the two lawmakers.

On Monday, several Muslim leaders in the party accused a section of Muslim leaders of indulging in a misleading campaign that the party was acting against Muslim leadership, even as it supported the action of the party.

Take strict action

"The campaign is deeply unfortunate and misleading. The facts indicate that the situation is a result of a failure within a section of Muslim leadership, which was unable to effectively secure a ticket for a minority candidates," KPCC vice-president Obedulla Shariff told presspersons.

He urged the AICC to take strict action against those found guilty of anti-party activities and uphold discipline, unity, and integrity of the party. Though the party was ready to consider a candidate from among several Muslim aspirants, the community leadership proposed only Mr. Jabbar, disregarding several other capable aspirants, said another party functionary and KPCC vice-president Y. Sayeed Ahmed, who is also chairman of the D. Devaraj Urs Truck Terminal.

"The anti-party activities have caused confusion and resulted in division of votes, helping smaller parties and Independent candidates," he claimed.

'Creating unrest'

Pointing out at attempts by a small faction within the party to create unrest by involving select religious figures, KPCC vice-president A.R. Muzammil Hussain said the attempts were 'deeply concerning' and these efforts appear to be aimed at shielding individuals involved in anti-party activities and pressure leadership to overlook indiscipline.

Conveyed to DKS that action against minority leaders 'inappropriate': Satish Jarkiholi

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

Public Works Minister and KPCC working president Satish Jarkiholi said on Monday that he believe the party's action against minority leaders for their alleged role in the bypolls to be "inappropriate" and he had conveyed this to KPCC president and Deputy Chief Minister D.K, Shivakumar. "He listened patiently and has promised remedial action in this regard," he told reporters on Tuesday.

"Initiating action against minority leaders in the midst of the election process, for their reported action or inaction is not right. I have made my opinion clear," he told reporters.

He, however, claimed that his meeting with Mr. Shivakumar in Bengaluru recently was about routine party matters and there was no need to attach additional significance to it.

"Minorities are the bulwark of the Congress and they should get proper representation and justice in the party platforms," he said.

Legislative Assembly Speaker U.T. Khader at a press conference in Mangaluru on Monday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'Yet to get official intimation of order against Kulkarni'

The Hindu Bureau
MANGALURU

Assembly Speaker U.T. Khader said here on Monday that his office will take a call on disqualifying Vinay Kulkarni as MLA of Dharwad only after he "officially receives intimation" about the life sentence.

The special court dealing exclusively with criminal cases against former and sitting MPs and MLAs in Bengaluru on April 15 sentenced Kulkarni and 16 others to life for the murder of BJP leader Yogeshgouda Goudar in Dharwad on June 15, 2016.

"Unless I am officially communicated to about the sentence, no action can be taken," Mr. Khader told reporters in Mangaluru.

> Unless I am officially communicated to about the sentence, no action can be taken
>
> **U.T. KHADER,** Legislative Assembly Speaker

Mr. Khader said there were reports that the MLA will go on an appeal against the court's judgment. "If he does so, then he will continue as the MLA," he said.

Section 8 of Representation of People's Act states that if an MP/MLA is sentenced to imprisonment of not less than six months, then he/she shall be disqualified from the date of conviction and shall continue to be disqualified for a further term of six years since his/her release.

It further states that if the person is MP or MLA on the date of conviction, disqualification shall not take effect until three months have elapsed from the date of the court order. If an appeal or revision petition is filed within the three-month period, the disqualification will not come into effect until the appeal or revision application is disposed of by the court, the Section 8 states.

Internal reservation: Special Cabinet meeting on Friday

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Amid pressure from various Dalit groups, the Karnataka government will discuss the internal reservation matrix for 101 Scheduled Castes within the 15% reservation at a rescheduled special Cabinet meeting this Friday.

The special Cabinet meeting scheduled in the last week of March was postponed citing the Model Code of Conduct following the announcement of bypolls to Bagalkot and Davangere South Assembly constituencies.

Public appointments in State have almost stalled owing to confusion in internal reservation besides a slew of cases in the High Court of Karnataka on issues of reservation.

Meanwhile, the government has announced one of the biggest recruitment drives to fill 56,432 posts.

Details of the special Cabinet meeting was made known on Monday, and follows pressure exerted by Dalit Left (Madigas) Ministers – K.H. Muniyappa and R.B. Thimmapur – on Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during the last Cabinet meeting on Thursday to finalise the internal reservation matrix.

The Dalit Right (Holeyas) and "touchable" castes of Koramas, Korachas, Bhovis, and Lambanis are opposed to the internal reservation within 15%. "A technical committee headed by the Chief Secretary is looking into the issue of categorisation, ratio for each categories, and the roster points to be fixed for each category. All of these would be discussed during the Cabinet meeting," a source aware of the development said, adding that the committee is expected to submit its report before the special Cabinet meeting.

The internal reservation has become a vexed issue in Karnataka. While the H.N. Nagamohan Das Commission recommended 6%, 5%, and 4% to the Dalit Left, the Dalit Right, and touchable castes respectively, besides allocating 1% each to 59 nomadic communities and Adi Karnataka, Adi Dravida, and Adi Andhra groupings, the government changed the classifications under pressure.

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RO No. 02/DPI/MCD/2026-27 Commercial Officer, Advertisement Department, MCD

CAUVERY NEERAVARI NIGAMA NIYAMITHA
(A Government of Karnataka Enterprises)
Executive Engineer, K.R.Sagara Division, K.R. Sagara
SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION NO - 01/2026-27 Dated : 18-04-2026
The Executive Engineer, K.R. Sagara Division, K.R.Sagara, Srirangapatna Taluk, Mandya Dist.on behalf of the Managing Director CNNL Mysore has invited tender through Kpp-procurement https://www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in for 02 No. of works Amounting from Rs. 402.74 Lakhs to Rs. 161.35 Lakhs and on EMD As per KPP Portal. Any further information Or Clarification for the above said work including last date, opening date, Pre-bid meeting date, EMD, etc., can be obtained from above mentioned office during the office hours & from the above said website.
Sd/- Executive Engineer,
K.R. Sagara Division, K.R. Sagara.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

FIRST YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Dr.C.Nancy Stella Bai
DOB: 21-04-1940 - DOD: 21-04-2025
Retired Professor,
Mother Teresa Women's University & Lecturer,
Madras Christian College,Tambaram
From HIS grace she came, to HIS presence she returned - on this same day, 21st April
Remembered by family with love, missed beyond words, cherished forever

IN MEMORIAM

HOMAGE TO OUR FORMER MANAGING DIRECTOR
Sri. RM. ARUNACHALAM
THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Born : 18-07-1947
Expired : 21-04-1996

Former Managing Director:
Sree Visalam Chit Fund Ltd.,

IN MEMORIAM
"To one of the best people who ever lived
We all miss and love very much
You are always in our hearts"

With Fond Remembrance
AR. Viswanathan, Chairman
AR. Umapathy, Managing Director
AR. Meenakshi, Director

Family Members, Relatives, Friends
and
Employees of Sree Visalam Chit Fund Ltd.

IN MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONES
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From Page One

ED searches premises linked to Congress MLA Haris in crypto case

CRPF personnel standing guard during an ED raid at the residence of MLA and BDA chairman N.A. Haris, at Ashok Nagar, in Bengaluru on Monday. ALLEN EGENUSE J.

This includes hacking websites and cryptocurrency wallets to steal virtual digital assets (VDAs), siphoning off sensitive data and funds, and selling stolen crypto assets through trading platforms to obscure the origin of the money. The proceeds were allegedly routed through multiple bank accounts for layering before being used for personal gains.

The ED said further investigation is under way.

Karandlaje charge

Meanwhile, Union Minister of State for MSME Shobha Karandlaje on Monday alleged that politicians, especially those belonging to the Congress, had made investments in other countries through bitcoins.

Responding to queries by mediapersons on the ED raids on Mr. Harris, the Union Minister accused the Congress of indulging in economic offences for a long time. "Investment through bitcoins too is part of such economic offences by them," she alleged.

The Union Minister said that the raids had taken place following information that investments had been made illegally in bitcoins.

Virudhunagar fireworks unit blast toll rises to 25

Cheques for ₹5 lakh from the State government were given to the families of the deceased

The Hindu Bureau
VIRUDHUNAGAR/CHENNAI

The death toll in the blast that took place at a fireworks unit at Kattanarpatti here rose to 25, with two more workers succumbing to burns early on Monday.

R. Petchiammal, 51, and V. Panchavarnam, 56, of Tiruthagal, who suffered over 80% burns in the explosion that occurred at Vanaja Fireworks unit on Sunday, died at Virudhunagar Government Medical College hospital (VGMCH) on Monday. Six others, including a 12-year-old boy, are undergoing treatment.

A total of 20 persons, including seven police personnel and four Fire and Rescue Services personnel, who were injured in the second blast, are also undergoing treatment.

With 18 of the deceased hailing from Servaikaranpatti, hundreds of villagers and relatives of the victims gathered on the VGMCH premises since Monday morning. They said none of the district officials consoled them, despite the accident being the result of their negligence. The relatives demanded ₹30 lakh and a government job for a member of each of the bereaved family.

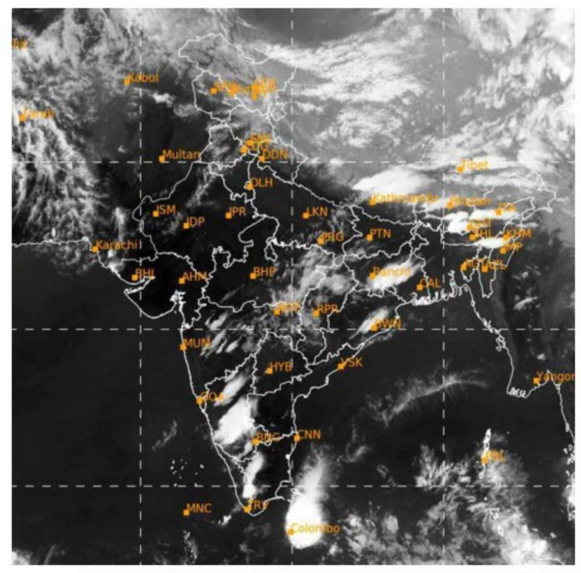
A section of the public and relatives of the 25 workers killed in the blast at Vanaja fireworks unit outside the mortuary of Virudhunagar Government Medical College hospital on Monday. G. MOORTHY

General secretary of Virudhunagar district Fireworks and Matches Workers' Association M.C. Pandian said several lapses in safety measures were found at Vanaja fireworks unit., only because of the negligence of the officials.

After prolonged talks, cheques for ₹5 lakh from the State government were handed over to the families. The Department of Labour handed over ₹50,000 in cash to each of the families of the deceased, Virudhunagar Collector N.O. Sukhaputra said. Efforts would be taken to expedite the process to obtain ₹2 lakh compensation from the PM's Relief Fund. The fireworks association promised to give ₹3 lakh to the families of the deceased.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.15 HRS)

Forecast for Tuesday: Heavy/very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Meghalaya. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Sikkim, West Bengal, Odisha, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	35.6	27.0	Kozhikode	—	36.4	28.6
Ahmedabad	—	40.2	24.9	Kurnool	—	42.7	27.4
Aizawl	—	32.7	19.9	Lucknow	—	41.6	24.0
Allahabad	—	44.4	24.6	Madurai	—	40.2	26.1
Bengaluru	—	35.8	24.4	Mangaluru	—	33.7	26.4
Bhopal	—	39.8	28.5	Mumbai	—	34.9	25.6
Bhubaneswar	—	35.7	25.5	Mysuru	—	36.4	20.2
Chandigarh	—	38.1	18.6	New Delhi	—	39.5	22.8
Chennai	—	37.6	27.9	Patna	—	40.0	26.1
Coimbatore	—	38.0	25.2	Port Blair	—	33.0	25.6
Dehradun	—	37.0	20.2	Puducherry	—	34.7	27.0
Gangtok	1	22.3	14.4	Pune	0.4	40.8	25.5
Goa	—	35.6	27.0	Raipur	—	44.0	30.5
Guwahati	117	31.6	21.0	Ranchi	—	40.1	26.0
Hubballi	—	37.0	22.0	Shillong	0.7	26.2	15.2
Hyderabad	2	39.8	26.0	Shimla	—	25.6	14.2
Imphal	—	30.0	20.3	Srinagar	0.2	23.5	9.4
Jaipur	—	40.0	27.0	Thiruvananthapuram	—	35.5	27.3
Kochi	10	33.0	22.2	Tiruchi	—	39.1	26.0
Kohima	—	24.0	17.0	Vijayawada	—	39.0	27.6
Kolkata	—	36.4	27.0	Visakhapatnam	—	33.0	27.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.88	..47	10	 92	...159	
Bengaluru	.22	..28	17	 54	...108	
Chennai	...6	..13	28	 20	49	
Delhi	.31	..76	68	... 174	...297	
Hyderabad	.24	..23	19	 84	76	
Kolkata	...7	..42	32	 61	58	
Lucknow	.12	..53	63	... 248	...133	
Mumbai	...4	..18	45	 64	...149	
Pune	..—	..26	64	 48	94	
Visakhapatnam	.51	..58	22	 31	...119	

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 350 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Puducherry recorded a healthy AQI score of 29

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Scientists demonstrate green biofuel route from sugarcane waste

V. Geetanath
HYDERABAD

Scientists at the Hyderabad-based CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT) have unveiled a promising advance: transforming sugarcane residue into high-quality biofuel using a greener, more efficient process that could aid India's transition towards cleaner energy and better utilisation of agricultural waste.

The team, which was led by Alka Kumari along with researchers Sri Chandana and T. Satish and working under the guidance of CSIR-IICT director D. Srinivas Reddy, demonstrated an improved Catalytic Hydrothermal Liquefaction (HTL) process to convert sugarcane bagasse, which is the residue left after crushing sugarcane, into biofuel.

EVM strongroom access contested

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHIKODE

The opening of one of the rooms at a complex in Kozhikode of Kerala, where electronic voting machines (EVMs) used for the Assembly election are kept, kicked up a controversy on Monday. The EVMs from six Assembly segments in the district are kept at the JDT Islam Complex at Vellimadukunnu. While the United Democratic Front (UDF) claimed that one of the strongrooms housing EVMs had been opened in an "unauthorised manner," officials rejected the charge and said the room, which contained only election materials, was opened with the knowledge of agents of political parties to collect data for updating a poll software.

Saying that the room was opened without prior intimation, UDF candidates from the district sought removal of returning officer for Perambra constituency and demanded increased security.

Flight returns to Hubballi after being diverted due to bad weather

The Hindu Bureau
HUBBALLI

Passengers of a Hyderabad-Hubballi flight (IC3401) of air operator FLY91 experienced some anxious moments on Sunday as their aircraft could not land in Hubballi because of inclement weather.

The flight which left Hyderabad at 3 p.m. was scheduled to land at Hubballi Airport at 4.30 p.m. However, because of inclement weather, the pilot could not land the flight.

After it hovered around for some time, the flight was diverted to Bengaluru and landed there safely. Subsequently, the flight returned to Hubballi and then, to Hyderabad.

However, family members of the passengers were upset over what they termed as poor service by the FLY91 staff. They said that the staff failed to give proper information on why the flight was delayed and were rude towards them.

A video clip of the passengers in panic and in tears, which was sent to their family members, subsequently went viral on social media.

On Monday, Jaykumar Alagundagi, a passenger seen in the video clip, told presspersons that the flight could not land because of turbulence and as they were not sure of whether they would survive or not, they had shot the video to send a message which they feared could have been their last message.

While he thanked the pilot for safe landing, he was upset with what he termed as rude behaviour by FLY91 ground staff.

Meanwhile, in a press release, FLY91 said that flight IC3401 flying from Hyderabad to Hubballi did not develop any technical snag as was reported in a section of the media.

Pop opera '*Odyssey of Love*' to premier in Bengaluru from May 7 to 9

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Kempegowda International Airport Foundation (KIAF), in collaboration with Phase 1 World and acclaimed director Kevin Oliver, will present *Odyssey of Love* from May 7 to May 9 at the Good Shepherd Auditorium.

The Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) said that inspired by Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, the *Odyssey of Love* is reimagined as a contemporary pop opera, blending movement, emotion, and music into a visually rich narrative.

"The musical journeys through love, loss, and transformation, celebrating womanhood. Anchored in the pillars of hope, love, and peace, it unfolds as an immersive, multi-sensory experience," it said.

It added that each ticket supports access to education through the KIAF's flagship programme, Namma Shikshana, which strengthens government schools through infrastructure, digital access, and holistic learning.

Tickets are available on BookMyShow.

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice No.: ECN-01-2026-RT1
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following works:

Item of work	Approx. Value
Arranging additional High Tension Power supply to an extent dedicated feeder for 1150 KVA (Existing 350 KVA) totaling to 1500 KVA from Pottery Road to Bangalore Cantonment Railway station.	Rs. 1,12,52,164.02/-

Last date for submission of bids: **Upto 11:00 Hrs. on 06.05.2026**
For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in
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CENTRAL RAILWAY
SOLAPUR DIVISION
E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
Divisional Store Office Central Railway, Solapur for and on behalf of President of India invites online e-tenders on Railway's e-procurement website **www.ireps.gov.in** from the capable, reputed firms/Contractors for the following works. **Tender No.:** 96265021A, **Description:** Goods, Manufacturing and Supply of 1 in 8.5 BG 60KG Weldable CMS Crossing on PSC sleepers in accordance with RDSO's standard drawing No. T-6441 (Alt-4) with latest alteration amended up to date of tender closing, including supply of 6mm thick nylon cord reinforced GRSP for 1 in 8.5 BG 60Kg Weldable CMS Crossing (Details attached at Annexure-A) **Quantity:** 25 Set, **Earnest Money (INR):** Rs. 1,94,110/-, **Date & Time of Closing of tender on www.ireps.gov.in:** 27.04.2026 after 11:30. The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website frequently before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/ corrigenda issued for this tender. Website: **www.ireps.gov.in.**
Sr. Divisional Materials Manager
DE/Sur-17 **Central Railway, Solapur**
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CBC 07101/11/0001/2627

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER RCD, ROAD DIVISION, JAMSHEDPUR, JHARKHAND
e-Procurement Notice
For National Competitive Bidding (2nd Call)
e-Tender Reference No. RCD/JAMSHEDPUR/752, Date-20.04.2026

1.	Name of the work	Reconstruction of Manushmudia of Bahragora to Darishol Chowk Road for year 2025-26. Total Length- 10.274 km
2.	Estimated Cost of Work (in INR)	Rs 37,03,07,800.86 (Rupees Thirty Seven Crore Three Lakh Seven Thousand Eight Hundred and Paise Eighty Six Only)
3.	Initial Bid Security (Rs In Lacs)	Rs 37.04 Lakh (Rupees Thirty Seven Lakh Four Thousand only).
4.	Initial Bid Security in the shape of	Initial Bid Security - As per SOP issued by Information Technology and e-Governance Department, Govt. of Jharkhand vide Letter No.120, Dt. 03.10.2023
5.	Cost of Bidding documents	Rs 10,000.00 (Rs Ten Thousand) only.
6.	Time of Completion	12 (Twelve Months)
7.	Date of Publication of Tender on website	22.04.2026 at 12.30 P.M.
8.	Start date of bidding	22.04.2026 from 12.30 P.M.
9.	Last date & Time for online bidding	14.05.2026 up to 02.00 PM.
10.	Type of Bid	Two envelope mode (Technical and Financial Bid)
11.	Last date & time for receipt of Bid Security and other documents in Online form	14.05.2026 Through e-tendering portal www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in As per SOP issued by Information Technology and e-Governance Department, Govt. of Jharkhand vide Letter No.120, Dt. 03.10.2023
12.	Date & time for opening of Technical Bid	15.05.2026 at 3.30 PM by Chairman e-Procurement Cell, Room No. 330 A, 3rd Floor, Road Construction Department, Jharkhand Mantralaya, Dhurwa, Ranchi-834004.
13.	Date & Time of Pre Bid Meeting	29.04.2026 on 12.30 P.M. At Office of the Chief Engineer (Communication), Road Construction Department, Engineers Hostel No.2, Dhurwa, Ranchi-834004
14.	Name & address of office Inviting tender	Executive Engineer, RCD, Road Division, Jamshedpur, Road No.- 1, CH Area.
15.	Contact no. of Procurement officer	0657-2227724
16.	Helpline number of e-Procurement cell	0651-2401010

Above informations are only indicative. Detail NIT & SBD published on Tender portal shall be final and mandatory. Details can be seen on website http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in
Superintending Engineer - cum - Executive Engineer RCD, Road Division, Jamshedpur
PR.NO. 377923 Road(26-27):D

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following works:
E-Tender Notice No.: B/TRD.2026-27/03 Dated: 15.04.2026

Sl.#	Item of work	Approx. Value
1	(i) Recoupment of ballast at TSS, SP/SSP and provision of Cable Trench covers, (ii) provision of earthing and bonds at SSP/SP, FOB and Platform shelters in Bengaluru (SBC) Division.	Rs. 76,89,998.26

Last date for submission of bids: **Upto 15:00 Hrs. on 06.05.2026**
E-Tender Notice No.: B/TRD.2026-27/02 Dated: 15.04.2026

2	(i) OHE Modifications in connection with construction of FOB at Sivadi (SZV) Station. (ii) OHE Modification in connection with construction of FOB at Toppur Station. (iii) OHE Modifications in connection with provision of additional loop line at Karuvalli (KVLR). (iv) Dharmapuri Jn. (DPJ) Road-4 full wiring.	Rs. 1,11,76,235.80

Last date for submission of bids: **Upto 15:00 Hrs. on 06.05.2026**
E-Tender Notice No.: B/TRD.2026-27/01 Dated: 15.04.2026

3	Dodballapur (DBU): OHE Modifications in connection with provision of Emergency Dispatch cross over at Yelahanka (YNK) end for providing Universal R&D facility to all running lines and connectivity from Tower Car Shed to existing shunting neck including extension neck from 440 to 600m.	Rs. 80,58,459.00

Last date for submission of bids: **Upto 15:00 Hrs. on 06.05.2026**
For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/ Traction Distribution/ Bengaluru
PUB/47/AAMO/PRB/SWR/2026-27
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Temperatures cross 44°C in five districts of Telangana

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Maximum temperatures continued to soar across Telangana, with large parts of the State reeling under intense heatwave-like conditions on Sunday.

Five districts recorded temperatures of 44 degrees Celsius or above, while 14 saw readings between 43 degrees Celsius and 44 degrees Celsius. Another 11 districts saw temperatures ranging from 42C to 43C, and three districts recorded temperatures between 41C and 42C. In Hyderabad, Musheerabad saw a maximum temperature of 42.1 degrees Celsius.

Talamadugu in Adilabad district recorded the maximum temperature of 44.5 degrees Celsius.

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PERSONAL
CHANGE OF NAME
I, BADRINATH M CHEBBI S/O MUKUNDRAO H CHEBBI R/O No C 1903 Mantri Serenity Kanakapura Road Doddakallasandra Bangalore Karnataka–560062 have changed the name of my minor Daughter SHIVANI CHEBBI alias SHIVANI BADRINATH CHEBBI to SHIVANI BADRINATH CHEBBI aged 17 Years.
I, Amulya Nair, mother of minor child, Vihaana Nair Kumar, Date of Birth: 20/05/2021, residing at [Villa 11, Casagrand Florella phase 2, sarjapur - 562125], have changed her name to Vihanna Nair Kumar as per affidavit dated [16/04/2026]. Henceforth, she shall be known as VIHANNA NAIR KUMAR for all purposes.

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PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE TO MEMBERS / CREDITORS
(Under Section 17(4) of MSCS Act, 2002)
Date: 20.04.2026
To
All Members & Creditors of Bharat Petroleum Employees' Co-operative Society Ltd.
Subject: Notice of Proposed Merger and Invitation for Claims/Objections
Notice is hereby given that the Society has passed a resolution dated 27.09.2024 proposing merger with The Miller Co-operative Credit Society Ltd. under Section 17 of the Multi-State Co-operative Societies Act, 2002. In compliance with Section 17(4) of the Act: Any member or creditor may, within 30 days from the date of receipt/ publication of this notice, withdraw their shares / deposits / loans or raise objections, if any. All claims/ objections, if any, shall be submitted in writing to the Society at the following
Address:
BHARAT PETROLEUM EMPLOYEES' CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY LTD.
No.1, Ranganathan Gardens,
Anna Nagar, Chennai - 600040
Email (optional): bharatpetroleumecssro@gmail.com
Contact No.: 9444130686
If no claims/objections are received within the stipulated period of 30 days, it shall be presumed that:
✓The member/creditor has no objection to the proposed merger
✓ No claims/dues are pending
This notice is issued in compliance with Section 17(4) of the MSCS Act, 2002.
By Order of the Bharat Petroleum Employees' Co-operative Society Ltd.
J UDHAYAKUMAR
President

A plan of change

The BJP achieved its aim of leading Bihar after a long waiting game

Samrat Choudhary was sworn in as the 24th Chief Minister of Bihar, on April 15, 2026, becoming the first-ever politician from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to hold the office. His elevation follows a pattern that the BJP has mastered for its growth – outgrowing regional partners and inverting the hierarchy in its favour. The ground realities in the State had shifted in the 2020 Bihar election when the BJP won 74 seats, overtaking the Janata Dal (United), which unexpectedly slid to 43 of the 243 seats in the Assembly. In the 2025 Assembly elections, the BJP won 89 seats while the JD(U) won 85. The BJP waited a little longer before easing out JD(U) supremo Nitish Kumar, who was elected to the Rajya Sabha after two decades as Chief Minister. Mr. Choudhary's elevation follows yet another pattern of the BJP's flexibility in handing over the top post to recent entrants into the party. He was in the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the JD(U) before joining the BJP in 2017. Mr. Choudhary belongs to the Koeri Kushwaha caste and has been the OBC face of the BJP. The BJP-JD(U) alliance, along with other smaller parties, has dominated Bihar politics by mobilising the upper castes, the non-Yadav OBCs and the Extremely Backward Classes (EBC). While the upper castes have limited options other than the National Democratic Alliance, the EBCs can be volatile in their party preferences.

The BJP waited six years even after overtaking the JD(U) in numerical strength, precisely out of fear of unsettling the EBC voters who trusted Mr. Kumar. Mr. Choudhary's appointment as Chief Minister is the BJP's direct bid to reach into the OBC-EBC base that it used to negotiate through Mr. Kumar. This transition could potentially open up new social alignments within the BJP and the JD(U). The fate of the JD(U) itself, now that Mr. Kumar is no longer at the helm, is uncertain. Mr. Choudhary has become Chief Minister on the strength of the BJP central leadership's confidence in him, but the task of winning the confidence of party workers and voters rests entirely on his shoulders. Bihar also carries a considerable governance deficit that needs urgent attention. The State has a dynamic and young population, yet its education and health sectors remain in distress. Mr. Choudhary will have to show vision and commitment to build on the marginal gains that the State has made in recent years and focus on human development, in the absence of which any amount of infrastructure investment will be suboptimal. Bihar's progress would have a multiplier effect on the entire country and its new Chief Minister must consolidate quickly and marshal all available forces towards that end.

The price of negligence

Human involvement in hazardous industries must be minimal

In yet another gruesome explosion at a fireworks unit on April 19 in Tamil Nadu's southern Virudhunagar district, 25 workers were killed and eight others injured. The number of injured went up to 20, including policemen and firefighters, after another explosion occurred at the unit later. In the past four years, at least 134 people have died and 89 have been injured in such explosions in the district, which is known for its concentration of fireworks units. It is an outright misnomer to describe this type of explosion as an accident, as any preliminary investigation would reveal. Accidents are associated with elements of surprise and unanticipated occurrence. But in the case of Virudhunagar, it is known to every worker – even if no separate sensitisation course is conducted – that the firecracker industry is hazardous and that any negligence of safety norms can result in disaster. Moreover, such explosions have occurred at regular intervals in the district, claiming the lives of scores of workers, most of whom come from economically weaker sections of society. Beyond expressing condolences and announcing solatium, the authorities at the Union and State levels have done little of substance to reduce, if not eliminate, the risk of such explosions. What they should and could have done is intensify meaningful monitoring, the absence of which is now and then felt in the form of explosions.

The Virudhunagar incident has brought into focus the role of law enforcement authorities in ensuring proper supervision, as the unit in question was operating on a Sunday – observed as a holiday by the fireworks industry – apparently without permission. Contrary to the norms specified in the licence issued by the district authorities, which allow only a dozen people to work in any fireworks unit at any given time, 40 people were present at the unit at the time of the explosion on Sunday. These two aspects, judging by the frequency of such explosions, are not unique to this particular fireworks unit. Official inspections may have taken place but they would have been carried out more as a ritual than as a meaningful exercise. There have, of course, been reports of a manpower shortage within the monitoring authorities. While coming down heavily on wrongdoers, including unlicensed units and those working regularly in violation of safety norms, the officials should also ensure that, in the name of tighter supervision, legitimately functioning units are not subjected to harassment. They should also not gloss over the economic reality of the district where the industry provides employment to lakhs of people in a region that is largely arid and dependent on rainfed irrigation. Sober elements in the industry should consider ways to increase the use of automation and reduce human involvement.

The strategic vulnerability in India's LPG supply model

Shrikant Madhav Vaidya

Former Chairman of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. and an energy strategist

India's Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) problem is not a passing shortage. It comes from a gap that has grown too wide to ignore. India consumed about 33.15 million tonnes of LPG last year, but domestic production met only about 40% of that need. The remaining 60% had to be imported. Put plainly, India's total LPG demand is now about 250% of indigenous production, while annual LPG imports are equal to about 150% of domestic LPG output. That is not a minor balancing gap. It is a significant mismatch between what India produces and what its kitchens consume.

This matters because LPG in India is overwhelmingly a household fuel; commercial LPG accounts for less than 10% of national consumption. So, the imported molecule is not mainly feeding a flexible industrial user that can cut runs or switch feedstock. It is going into domestic kitchens. This is what makes India's LPG dependence more serious than a normal product-import issue. A petrochemical plant can slow down. A household kitchen cannot.

No longer a dependable corridor

The crisis now has exposed this sharply. About 90% of India's LPG imports normally transit the Strait of Hormuz. India must now accept that the Strait of Hormuz cannot be treated as a routinely dependable corridor for household fuel security. Even if the present tensions ease, the old assumption of uninterrupted normality will not return easily. The risk attached to this route has now entered the strategic calculation in a lasting way.

India's LPG use is mainly household-based, heightening import vulnerability

Import dependence alone, however, does not tell the full story. Japan imports a larger share of LPG than India does. China and South Korea also import large volumes of LPG. But what matters is not only how much a country imports. It is where the molecule goes, what alternatives households already have, and how much storage supports the system.

Lessons from Japan

The *table* shows why raw percentages can mislead. Japan appears more import-dependent than India on LPG. Yet, Japanese household vulnerability is far lower – LPG serves only about 40% of households. Electricity accounts for about 55% of residential final energy use, and city gas also has a large residential base. More importantly, Japan has about 108.3 days of LPG stock through national and private reserves. Japan imports more, but it cushions that dependence with alternatives and storage.

China and South Korea are different again. In China, a large share of its LPG demand is driven by the petrochemical sector. In South Korea, household energy is supported much more by natural gas and electricity.

India's position is more exposed because the imported molecule goes overwhelmingly into domestic kitchens. India's problem is not that it imports LPG – many countries do. India's problem is that it imports LPG for the one use that is hardest to defer and also the hardest to replace quickly.

India's storage position also needs to be seen clearly. The Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell reports about 15 days of LPG tankage cover in the broad operational sense across import locations, bottling plants, refineries and fractionators. But visible underground cavern-based deep storage is only about 140,000 tonnes – 60 TMT at Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) and 80 TMT at Mangaluru (Karnataka) which is equal to only about 1.5 days of national demand. The first number shows that the system is not empty. The second shows that reserve-style protection is still very thin for a country of India's size and import dependence.

There is another point that deserves attention. India is not buying LPG in a loose, neutral global market. The exportable pool is not large, and it is already heavily claimed by a few Asian buyers.

Just four Asian countries absorb a little over half of the world's exportable LPG pool. And the rest is not sitting idle waiting to be redirected. Much of it is already tied up in petrochemicals, household cooking and heating, and autogas. This is why any sustained loss of dependable Gulf supply can quickly tighten the market.

What India should do

How can India reduce its vulnerability?

First, it should stop treating all LPG molecules as one pool. During the present disruption, India has already directed refiners to prioritise propane and butane for cooking LPG rather than for petrochemical or gasoline-blending use. That logic should continue. Domestically produced LPG and refinery-origin C3/C4 (propane/butane) streams should be reserved first for household fuel security. Petrochemical users should increasingly arrange their own feedstock imports. The government should not have to defend domestic kitchens and industrial feedstock demand from the same protected pool.

Second, India should build a deeper LPG buffer. An initial goal of two to three weeks of protected cover for the household pool would be a sensible start. At current demand levels, that means about 1.3 million tonnes for 14 days and 1.9 million tonnes for 21 days. This is a large jump from the current cavern capacity, but it is the minimum scale at which India can begin to claim meaningful resilience.

Third, India needs a sustained campaign for electric cooking in urban and semi-urban India. This cannot be a one-season appeal. It has to continue over the years. Households with reliable power, adequate wiring and access to induction cooking should be encouraged to shift their primary cooking load away from LPG. A 'Give it up 2.0' plan should be launched.

The aim is simple: reduce the number of homes for which the LPG cylinder remains the first and only kitchen fuel. Piped Natural Gas (PNG) should expand where density supports it, but electricity is the broader lever.

India's LPG vulnerability will continue to persist unless policy addresses a basic mismatch: demand that is too high relative to domestic production; imports that are too concentrated in a single corridor, and excessive dependence concentrated in household kitchens. The answer is not simply to buy more LPG cargoes. It is to reserve domestic molecules for kitchens, separate petrochemical demand, build more storage, and steadily reduce the number of homes that rely on LPG alone.

India's LPG problem is not a passing shortage. It is an enduring mismatch between what the country produces and what its kitchens consume. This is why India's asymmetric LPG demand will remain a lasting vulnerability – unless the design of the system itself changes.

Why India is more exposed

High household dependence and tight global supply make the LPG risk sharper

A household LPG vulnerability matrix

Country	LPG import share of total demand	Total LPG demand as % of domestic production	LPG imports as % of domestic production	Household kitchen criticality of LPG	LPG cover / storage position
India	**60%**	**250%**	**150%**	**Very high**	**15 days operational tankage cover (PPAC); ~1.5 days in cavern-based deep storage**
Japan	70%	333.3%	233.3%	Low	108.3 days
China	40.4%	167.7%	67.7%	Low to moderate	No clear public LPG-days figure verified here
South Korea*	~74.5%	~391.7%	~291.7%	Low	15-30 day stockholding obligation framework

** Indicative, based on publicly available market data*

Who absorbs the global exportable LPG pool?

Country	LPG imports used for comparison	Share of global LPG exports*	Main use of LPG
China	36.7 MMT	26.3%	Mainly petrochemical-driven at the margin
India	**19.89 MMT**	**14.2%**	**Mainly household cooking fuel**
Japan	9.8 MMT	7%	Mixed: household/commercial + chemicals
South Korea*	~7 MMT	~5%	Mixed, with strong industrial/petrochemical role
Total	73.39 MMT	52.5%	-

** Using global LPG exports of 139.8 MMT. South Korea is indicative*

The price of a war far above the ground

Sanchita Chatterjee

Associated with Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS) International

Sohom Banerjee

Associated with CUTS International

Recently, at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport, a departure board quietly transitioned from "On Time" to "Delayed," and then to "Rescheduled." The official explanation – rerouting due to airspace restrictions over West Asia – barely concealed the deeper reality of the Iran war steadily redrawing the economic and operational contours of global aviation. What appears as episodic inconvenience is, in truth, an outward manifestation of a structural disturbance whose implications extend far beyond delayed departures.

Airspace closures across critical corridors have forced airlines into circuitous routes, often extending flight durations by two to eight hours depending on the routes, inflating fuel consumption and compressing already slender operating margins. Simultaneously, jet fuel prices surged to nearly $195-$197 a barrel. Given that fuel constitutes between 25% and 40% of total airline operating costs, such increases could destabilise the industry in which net margins rarely exceed 3% to 5%.

The impact is already visible: ticket prices have increased by 10%-20% in several markets, fuel surcharges risen by over 30% in certain cases, and thousands of flights cancelled globally, especially along the Europe-Asia axis. Yet, to dwell excessively on these symptoms is to risk overlooking a deeper question, which is what trajectory this disruption is likely to assume in the near future.

The new normal

The risk of sustained tensions between the United States-Israel and Iran is likely to persist over the medium term. A probable outcome is the gradual normalisation of inefficiency. Rerouted flight paths, once conceived as temporary adjustments, may become embedded within airline operating models, permanently altering route economics. In such a scenario, the industry would witness a sustained elevation in cost structures driven by higher fuel burn, increased crew costs, extended turnaround times, and reduced aircraft utilisation.

Over time, this would lead to rationalisation of airline networks, with marginal long-haul routes, particularly those linking secondary cities, becoming economically untenable. The geography of global aviation itself may undergo a subtle, yet significant, reconfiguration. An outcome of this may be traditional West Asian hubs ceding some of their pre-eminence to alternative transit points in Türkiye, Southeast Asia, or even India. For Indian carriers, however, the implications are more acute. Their structural dependence on West Asian air corridors for connectivity to Europe and North America renders them particularly vulnerable, creating a persistent imbalance between rising costs and the constraints of a price-sensitive market.

The Iran war and geopolitics will reshape global aviation economics

A more disquieting possibility lies in the prospect of escalation within or after the ceasefire period. Such a scenario may lead to wider airspace closures and sharper energy market disruptions; the consequences could assume a systemic character. Fuel prices, already volatile, may become both elevated and unpredictable, further amplifying operational uncertainty. Flight networks could contract, particularly across high-density intercontinental corridors, while elevated fares and geopolitical anxiety dampen demand. Unlike the COVID-19 pandemic, where demand collapsed due to health concerns, this would constitute a cost-induced contraction, wherein airlines continue to operate but under severe financial strain.

Handling the disruption

For India, such a scenario would be especially onerous. Aviation turbine fuel (ATF), already burdened by high taxation, would reflect the full force of global price shocks, compounded by currency depreciation. The sector could find itself confronting a confluence of pressures, escalating input costs, weakening demand, and constrained pricing power, potentially precipitating consolidation or strategic retrenchment among carriers with limited financial resilience.

Yet, crises, even of this magnitude, are not without possibilities of bearing latent opportunities.

A third trajectory – less immediate but strategically consequential – lies in adaptive reconfiguration. Faced with sustained geopolitical uncertainty, airlines and policymakers make a strategic decision to recalibrate. This could appear in the form of a diversification of routing strategies, reduced dependence on any single geopolitical corridor, alongside investments in ultra-long-haul aircraft capable of bypassing traditional transit hubs altogether. The emergence of alternative aviation hubs outside conflict-prone regions could gradually redistribute traffic flows, while policy interventions, particularly in markets such as India, may address structural inefficiencies, including the rationalisation of ATF taxation and the renegotiation of bilateral air service agreements. In such a scenario, India's current vulnerability could, with strategic foresight, be transformed into opportunity, positioning the country as an alternative node in the evolving architecture of global aviation.

This is a challenge

Amidst these future possibilities, one conclusion asserts itself with increasing clarity: geopolitics should no longer be treated as an exogenous shock to the aviation sector; rather, it should be seen as an intrinsic variable shaping its economics and operations. The long-standing assumption of predictable skies, upon which the industry's finely optimised networks were constructed, has probably been irreversibly unsettled.

Airlines must now internalise uncertainty, embedding scenario planning, dynamic pricing and strategic flexibility into the core of their operations. Possibly, for airlines, this is the equivalent of a 'Covid-shock' of global supply chains and an opportunity to re-strategise and recalibrate. For India's aviation sector, already navigating the complexities of high input costs and price-sensitive demand, the challenge is particularly formidable.

What is unfolding is not merely a transient disruption, but the gradual emergence of a new aviation order, one defined not by the efficiency of open skies, but by the exigencies of a fractured and uncertain geopolitical landscape. The question is no longer whether turbulence will persist, but whether the industry possesses the strategic agility to navigate it.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Cracker factory blast

It is saddening that fire disasters continue unabated in Tamil Nadu's Virudhunagar district (Front page, April 20). The gruesome incident is a clear testament to the gross negligence of officials and agencies in discharging their mandated responsibilities. Standard operating procedures appear to be observed more in breach than in compliance. The time has come to mechanise various processes involved in the manufacture of fireworks, rather than relying heavily on manual labour. Meanwhile, an in-depth scientific study could be undertaken to rework the composition of the chemicals used in this hazardous industry.

V. Johan Dhanakumar,
Chennai

The time has come for us to stop celebrating our festivals with crackers. I have never understood the "enjoyment" people derive from the ear-piercing sounds of exploding crackers. Unless we change the way we celebrate, the firecracker industry will continue to flourish, and poor workers will remain vulnerable.

Sukumaran C.V.,
Kongad, Palakkad, Kerala

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

Puzzle of missing urgency around learning

Jatin Goyal

Civil Servant of the DANICS cadre, presently posted in the UT of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu

India, like many other developing countries, has been in the midst of a learning crisis, as evidenced by Annual Status of Education Reports (ASER), notwithstanding the marginal improvements seen in the last few years. Yet, the absence of learning outcomes, especially Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), has failed to generate urgency on the ground, despite policy backing and unprecedented funding.

Why does a crisis of such magnitude not result in immediate action? The answer may lie in a concept often overlooked in public policy: salience. Systems change not merely when policies are well-designed or resources are abundant, but when enough people recognise a problem, believe it matters, and act on it.

The necessity of salience

Vietnam provides a useful example. Researchers from the RISE Programme at the Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford, found that Vietnam outperformed far richer nations in learning outcomes despite having no significant advantage with respect to spending or infrastructure. The explanation was disarmingly simple yet profound: Vietnam improved learning outcomes because it wanted to. The 'wanting to' reflects salience – a shared recognition that learning matters. In India, this salience remains weak at the field level.

However, there is no dearth of policy intent. The National Education Policy, 2020 clearly identifies FLN as an urgent national priority, with the NIPUN Bharat Mission mobilising administrative machinery and financial resources. The Prime Minister himself has emphasised the importance of fluency in oral reading to enable children to transition from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn'. Yet, this policy intent has not fully translated into field-level urgency. Across schools and communities, learning outcomes often remain secondary. Conversations in school management committees or parent-teacher meetings tend to focus on buildings, toilets, and teacher vacancies, rather than the fundamental question: can children read and understand a basic text?

Myriad factors

The gap can be explained by the following reasons. First, learning is inherently difficult to observe. Unlike a pothole or missing rations, poor learning is intangible. A child copying from the blackboard can create the illusion of learning. Further, the concept of oral reading fluency – where reading becomes effortless enough for cognitive effort to shift from decoding words to understanding meaning – is not widely understood. As a result, findings from surveys such as ASER, which show that many Grade 5 children cannot fluently read a Grade 2 text, often seem exaggerated and are dismissed.

Second, power asymmetries weaken accountability, particularly in the education sector. Children have no voice, and their parents may lack the tools to assess learning. Teachers and administrators, by contrast, occupy positions of greater authority and social capital. Decision-making and teacher accountability remain centralised, while local institutions have limited influence. The exit of the middle class from public schooling further reduces bottom-up pressure, a key determinant of salience in a system.

Third, the scale of the crisis is under-recognised. When a senior official was briefed by the author that fluent reading in Grade 5 had improved from 20% to 65% in the Union Territory of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, his first reaction was one of alarm: "What do you mean 35% of children still cannot read?" His reaction was valid but revealing. It shows how even well-intentioned actors may not grasp the scale of the crisis.

Fourth, there is a fundamental disconnect in how responsibility is perceived: schooling is seen as the state's responsibility, while learning is often implicitly seen as dependent on the child's ability or family support. This undermines the role of systemic factors such as pedagogy, teacher support, curriculum design, and accountability mechanisms that are critical to shaping outcomes.

Fifth, acknowledging the problem is difficult. Accepting that millions of children are in school but not learning is deeply unsettling for educators who have spent their careers expanding access and enrolment. For political actors, openly acknowledging the scale of the crisis carries political risks. Yet, this failure is not the result of any single political dispensation or bureaucratic actor, but of a long-standing systemic neglect of learning outcomes.

Finally, a sense of fatalism often prevails. When systems appear entrenched, it is easy to assume that change is unlikely. However, change is important and possible.

The way forward

Over the last two decades, large-scale assessments have moved learning outcomes to the centre of policy discourse. There is now growing evidence that improving foundational learning at scale is both possible and cost-effective, with approaches such as 'Teaching at the Right Level' and structured pedagogy demonstrating disproportionate gains across contexts. Importantly, salience can be built through personal experience by conducting village-level assessments. When parents or officials see first-hand that a child cannot read, the issue ceases to be abstract; it becomes immediate and impossible to ignore. The path forward lies in making learning visible, communicating the scale of the problem, and demonstrating that solutions exist. It also requires creating conditions where those responsible for delivery are compelled to act.

Accepting that millions of children are in school but not learning is deeply unsettling for educators who have spent their careers expanding access and enrolment

Collectors race for investments

The CM will assign ranks to districts depending on how much capital is created

STATE OF PLAY

V. Raghavendra
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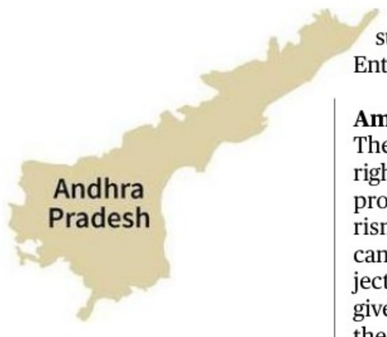
At the recent Collectors' Conference in Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu exhorted District Collectors (DCs) to play a proactive role in attracting investments to supplement the efforts of the State Investment Promotion Committee, the State Investment Promotion Board (SIPB), the AP Economic Development Board and other agencies. At the district level, there are District Industries Promotion Committees which have DCs as their chairpersons.

These Collectors have their work cut out for them as the CM has decided to assign ranks to districts on the basis of how much investment and employment has been created, and based on the Speed of Doing Business (SoDB). These DCs are not only expected to hold meetings with prospective entrepreneurs but also convince them to set up units in their districts. Further, the CM wants DCs to focus on giving prompt regulatory clearances in order to set a benchmark when it comes to SoDB.

On proper execution

The CM's plan bodes well as Collectors will have a thorough knowledge of the strengths of their districts; they can help in identifying and promoting specific areas where entrepreneurs can invest. Rayalaseema, for instance, has already emerged as a hub for renewable energy companies due to the relatively low cost of land compared to coastal areas. However, DCs should be careful to hand over the sites in a comprehensive manner, that is, they should



solve both land and non-land issues, such as access to water, electricity etc., in a way that does not later give any scope for hurdles in bringing the investment to fruition.

Some districts have inherent advantages over others in terms of the natural resources that are available, or proximity to other industrial centres. The Visakhapatnam and Anakapalli districts in the north, and the Tirupati, Nellore and Chittoor districts in the south have been the most sought after destinations due to their proximity to Visakhapatnam and Chennai. Incidentally, the DCs of Anakapalli, Visakhapatnam, Nellore, Tirupati and Kurnool districts were appreciated at the Collectors' Conference for achieving "impeccable results" in having some major projects already grounded. Most major industries/businesses are still making a beeline to these places. Therefore, some DCs already have a natural advantage, which might make other Collectors uneasy about the competition for ranks, given the lack of a level-playing field.

Another instruction to the DCs has been to entrust the responsibility of following up on projects to Mandal Special Officers, and to appoint Joint Collectors and Municipal Commissioners as special officers to major projects in order to ensure that any and all issues are sorted right from the very beginning, after the submission of the Industrial Entrepreneur Memorandum.

Ambitious plans

The CM, taking a step in the right direction, told the DCs to promote IT, MSMEs and tourism in places where they can't attract big industrial projects. He has also decided to give discretionary powers to the Collectors to allot up to five acres of land to projects, especially in the tourism sector, through the AP Industrial Infrastructure Corporation Limited. This is expected to help Collectors in quickly onboarding those keen to set up tourism facilities.

Post bifurcation, the Chief Minister has pivoted from single-city dependence to region-anchored industrialisation, building sectoral hubs across the coastal, delta, and Rayalaseema regions. The decriminalisation of minor offences in the purview of various departments, for which the AP Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 has been passed, is intended to help in achieving the desired SoDB.

The DCs have time till the next Collectors' Conference to be held in June/July to apprise the CM to what extent they have succeeded in mobilising investments. According to official sources, the government has tied up with 771 companies for investments amounting to nearly ₹20.35 lakh crore across 12 departments, a vast chunk of it in the Energy, Industries and Commerce Departments, since June 2024.

These projects are in different stages, and the government is eager to translate all proposals into reality at the earliest. It is in this context that the DCs are expected to compete for getting fresh investments, and rightly so – as efforts at the grassroots level will make the State prosper.

Minorities have been underrepresented in Bengal Assembly

Despite its reputation as a progressive State, women and Muslims have sparsely held power in West Bengal

DATA POINT

Sabir Ahamed
Ashin Chakraborty

The election in West Bengal is approaching fast, amid an ocean of uncertainty over who will ultimately be able to cast their votes. In its final list, the Election Commission (EC) has placed nearly 60 lakh citizens under adjudication. While a supplementary list has been published, the fate of 27 lakh voters remains uncertain. The entire SIR exercise has created mayhem both in the administration and among citizens, and has pushed the issue of human development and social justice to the margins.

As most political parties have announced their candidates, it is worthwhile to assess their social group and gender composition. These candidate lists offer an important lens to assess the extent of commitment towards India's pluralistic social fabric. However, what about the present composition of the State's legislature? By conducting a critical assessment of the composition of the 17th West Bengal Legislative Assembly, one aims to evaluate the representation of various social groups in the State's highest policymaking body. As State governments bear the bulk of the responsibility for designing, adjusting and implementing welfare policies effectively, the composition of the Assembly is crucial. Having representatives from various social groups ensures that policy priorities address the needs of everyone in society.

The politics of presence

Anne Phillips' theory of the politics of presence makes the case for inclusive institutions in order to fight against unfair exclusion. Representation is more than a symbol; it decides whose voices are heard in decision-making. It has been largely known that the representation of MLAs have been skewed towards the upper castes and males for a few years now. But the Sabar Institute's report, "Diversity and Representation in the Seventeenth West Bengal Legislative Assembly: An Analysis of Gender and Social Group Presence" shows that the gaps are even more significant inside the committees of the State's Legislative Assembly. These committees are spaces where policies are discussed and consequential decisions are made. It is only fair that all voices find an equal footing to ensure that such decisions are fair and equitable.

The 2011 Census (despite being 15 years too dated) shows that Muslims make up almost 27% of West Bengal's population. However, their voices are mostly missing from places where policies are made. The study empirically documents this "conspicuous absence" in critical decision-making areas, despite their considerable electoral importance under successive regimes of both the Left Front and the Trinamool Congress. Muslims are still not well represented, both as MLAs and as heads of important committees **(Chart 1)**.

The 17th West Bengal Legislative Assembly reveals significant gaps in representation with respect to the State's demographic composition. Muslims hold only 14.8% of unique committee positions. This share drops even more to 14.4% when you take out the Standing Committee on Minority Affairs, which has most of its members from minority communities for obvious reasons.

In West Bengal politics, this pattern of not having enough representation has been going on for decades. In 2011, 20.4% of MLAs were Muslim, but by 2021, that number had dropped to 14.7%, a difference of more than 12 percentage points with their population share.

Equitable representation

The West Bengal legislature better represents Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). Their representation in the State Assembly is now about the same as or even greater than their share of the population. In 2021, SC and ST MLAs accounted for 34.2% of the Assembly, which is more than the 29.3% of the population they represent **(Chart 2)**.

However, the representation of social groups among the Chairpersons of the committees has been skewed. While Muslims hold 18.4% of committee chairperson roles, there are currently no ST chairpersons. The Standing Committee on School Education has zero Muslim representation **(Chart 3)**.

Although the importance of women in West Bengal politics has significantly increased in recent years, this has not translated into meaningful participation in heavyweight committees where critical policy decisions are discussed. There are a lot of committees in the government, such as the ones on Finance and Planning, Higher Education, and School Education, which do not have any women. In 2021, the difference between women's population share and number of women in the Assembly was 36 percentage points **(Chart 4)**.

People think that the State of West Bengal is more progressive and hence more fair and inclusive than other States. But the truth is that a small group of people still have all the power to make decisions. To make a society abide by the idea of justice, we need to make sure that everyone's voice is being heard, especially people who have been left out for a long time.

The Assembly elections that are coming up in 2026 could have been a chance to fix these problems but when one looks at the lists of candidates from all the major parties, one can see that, in all likelihood, this will remain a distant dream.

Sabir Ahamed is Programme Director at Amartya Sen Research Centre, Pratichi, and also at the affiliated Sabar Institute. Ashin Chakraborty is with the Sabar Institute.

Assessing representation

The data for the tables were sourced from RTIs filed by Sabir Ahamed. Ahamed and Ashin Chakraborty authored Sabar Institute's report, "Diversity and Representation in the Seventeenth West Bengal Legislative Assembly: An Analysis of Gender and Social Group Presence"

CHART 1: Muslim representation versus the share of Muslims in the population of West Bengal (1962-2021)

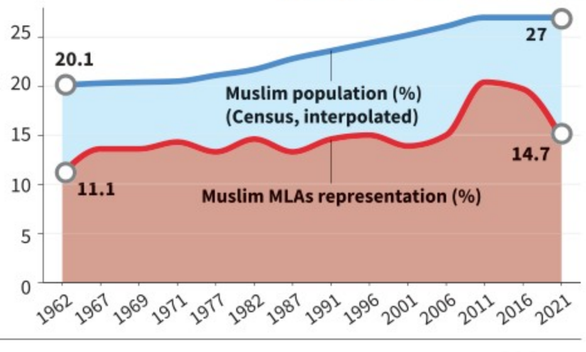


CHART 2: SC+ST representation versus their population share in West Bengal (1962-2021). Their representation is now greater than their population share

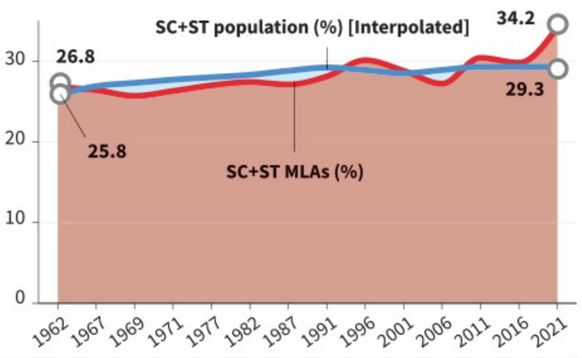
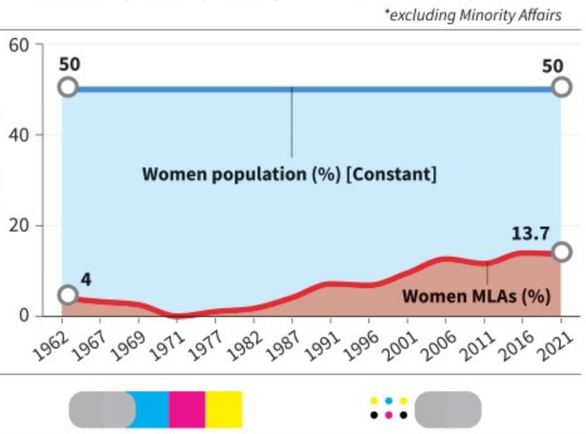


CHART 3: The representation of social groups among the Chairpersons of committees

Category	Population Share	MLAs (294)	Committee members* (679 seats, 41 committees)	Chairpersons (38)
Muslim	27%	14.7%	14.3%	18.4%
SC + ST	29.3%	34.2%	28.4%	13.2%
Women	~50%	13.7%	13.1%	13.2%

*excluding Minority Affairs

CHART 4: Women MLA representation versus women's share in the population of West Bengal (1962-2021). In 2021, the difference was 36 percentage points



FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 21, 1976

British collector visits Madras after 30 years

Madras, April 20: One of the late entrants to the coveted Indian Civil Service, an Englishman who left India after Independence in 1948, feels that the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure retain many good features.

While he served in the former composite Madras Presidency, Judiciary was not separate from the Executive. It was then an advantage to have both in the hands of the Collector particularly in the districts, Mr. J.C. Griffiths ICS (retired), said here to-day.

Visiting India after nearly 30 years, Mr. Griffiths was surprised at the more number of people speaking English, of a better type too, whether he was a businessman, a taxi-driver or a porter. Another feature in Madras was the absence of the "teddy boys and girls" hanging around street corners wearing long hair and sporting jeans – a common sight in most of the cities of the world. The thoroughfares in Madras were clean and the main roads were maintained well. But he was shocked at the traffic congestion near the Central Station. There were more factories but he could also see unemployment. The population explosion was perceptible. As one who had served as a District Supply Officer he was equally surprised that rationing still continued.

When Mr. Griffiths joined in Madras in 1937, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari the then "Prime Minister" interviewed him and wondered whether he could proceed to Salem as it was in that year that the experiment of Prohibition was being conducted there for the first time.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 21, 1926

Parsi war memorial in Bombay

Bombay, April 20: Sir Jamshedji Jijibhoy, Bart, performed the opening ceremony of the War Memorial column at the entrance to the Parsi Tower of Silence, on the Malabar Hill, created in memory of the members of the Parsi community who fell in the Great War. Sir Jamshedji in his speech said they had shown their loyalty to the King and country full well, and hoped the memorial would teach the future generation to stand by their rulers and to be patriotic.

‘BJP used women as a shield to push delimitation’

Government wanted to divide the INDIA bloc and deploy their usual tactics to push through the Constitution Amendment Bill but they had not anticipated the unity in the alliance which is why they appear rattled, the Congress leader says; the next Kerala CM will be chosen in a democratic fashion, says Venugopal, who played the role of a troubleshooter during the Assembly election campaign

INTERVIEW

K.C. Venugopal

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

As the Narendra Modi-led government launched an all-out attack on the Opposition as anti-women, Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal, in an interview to *The Hindu*, defended the Opposition and accused the Centre of trying to divide the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) to push through delimitation under the Constitution Amendment Bill. Edited excerpts:

The government knew that it didn’t have the numbers, yet it pushed for a Constitution Amendment Bill to link the women’s reservation law with the delimitation process. Why do you think the government did this?

The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill was introduced in Parliament hastily when two large States were in the middle of election campaigning. The BJP hoped that creating a sense of urgency would cause chaos and disruption within the Opposition ranks. Their intention was to divide the INDIA bloc and deploy their usual tactics to push through such a Bill.

Soon, it became clear that it was an attempt to put in place a mechanism to gerrymander constituencies, along the lines of what they did in Assam and Jammu and Kashmir. The objective was to redraw India’s political map in their favour, and women’s reservation was used to hide their intentions. This should also be seen as a failure of a regime that labels every decision a ‘masterstroke’ and each manoeuvre a ‘Chanakya’ move. In reality, they fumbled in their attempt to push through an unconstitutional Bill and are now trying to set a narrative to cover this up.

Contrary to their expectations, the Opposition was alert and united. They had not anticipated such unity in the INDIA bloc, which is why they appear rattled.

How will you counter the BJP’s campaign that the Congress is anti-women and that is why it did not allow a Bill in their favour?

It is a campaign that is unlikely to be accepted by the people. The Congress has

SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

consistently championed women’s empowerment, including reservations for women, and cannot be accused of opposing women’s reservation. The women’s reservation Bill had already been passed in 2023, which we supported. We have been at the forefront of women’s empowerment – whether by implementing reservations in local bodies or by giving the country its first woman Prime Minister, the first woman Speaker, and the first woman President. The All India Congress Committee has also been led by women on multiple occasions, unlike the BJP or the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS], which has yet to see a woman at the helm.

In this instance, by using women as a shield, the BJP attempted to push through delimitation, which failed. That is why it is now pushing a campaign against the Opposition. The people of India can spot such campaigns. The fact that BJP MPs had placards ready immediately after the Parliament session ended suggests a coordinated attempt at narrative setting.

In Kerala, you led an aggressive campaign against the Left Front government for the Assembly poll but in Delhi, you coordinated with the Left to team up and fight against the government. How are you managing such contradictions?

At the national level, the INDIA bloc has stood united against what it sees as undemocratic policies of the NDA. The BJP’s approach is described as “divide and rule”, whereas the INDIA bloc seeks to bring people together, rising above differences to protect democracy and the Constitution. The alliance is a broader national coalition, even though there are differences at the State level. These differences were discussed, and a consensus was built from the initial meetings. There is clarity among the parties and there is no contradiction. This was also the case during the UPA [United Progressive Alliance] era, when parties retained independent positions in States but were united at the national level.

In the run-up to the Kerala Assembly polls, you were seen as a troubleshooter bringing factions together. If the UDF wins, are you a contender for Chief Minister?

Kerala has witnessed a strong campaign by the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF). The LDF [Left Democratic Front] will be rejected by the people, and the UDF will form the next government. There is no need for any leadership discussion at this stage. When the time comes to decide on the Chief Minister, the party will take a decision in a democratic manner.

What is your response to the PM’s address to the nation, attacking the Congress?

The Prime Minister’s address appeared overtly political, with repeated references to the Congress during an election period. Using an official platform in this manner raises concerns about adherence to the Model Code of Conduct. It is also concerning that the Election Commission is sleeping at the wheel and appears to be a puppet of the government. As far as the PM’s speech is concerned, it was political messaging after defeat.

From Page One

Iran undecided on talks; U.S. to keep blockade

“The deal that we are making with Iran will be far better than the JCPOA,” he wrote in another post, referring to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. “If a deal happens under Trump, it will guarantee peace, security, and safety, not only for Israel and the Middle East, but for Europe, America, and everywhere else.”

Iran’s President Masoud Pezeshkian said the U.S. was seeking the country’s surrender and that Iran would never submit to force. “Deep historical mistrust in Iran toward U.S. gov conduct remains, while unconstructive and contradictory signals from American officials carry a bitter message; they seek Iran’s surrender. Iranians do not submit to force,” the President said in a statement.

Last week, Iran said it would reopen the Strait of Hormuz for commercial vessels, after Mr. Trump announced a 10-day ceasefire in Lebanon. Mr. Trump “thanked” Iran for the move, but added that a U.S. blockade of Iranian ports would stay in place until both sides reach a deal. Iran then took a U-turn from its previous announcement and reasserted its control over the critical waterway. On Saturday, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps fired at two tankers, preventing them from crossing the Strait of Hormuz, following which Mr. Trump renewed his threat of hitting Iran’s civilian infrastructure.

“The U.S. Navy attacked the Iranian container ship *Touska* on Sunday night while it was sailing from China to Iran, subsequently taking control of the vessel,” Tasnim reported.

21 killed as bus rolls down hillside in J&K

Union Minister Jitendra Singh, who represents the Udhampur constituency in the Lok Sabha, confirmed the death toll. “Twenty-one casualties so far and 61 injured. Injured have been shifted to Udhampur Hospital, while one more seriously injured is being airlifted to Government Medical college Jammu... All possible assistance is being provided,” he said in a post on X.

Local people and teams from multiple security agencies worked together to transport the injured to the hospital. The Army said its units deployed in the area rescued dozens of civilians after the accident. “It plunged nearly 70 feet into a gorge. The impact led to multiple casualties, with several passengers trapped inside the mangled vehicle,” the Army said in a statement.

It said that troops from a battalion of Gorkha Rifles, who were *en route* to Samnabanj for training, “were the first to reach the site”. “They immediately launched rescue operations, evacuating trapped passengers from the wreckage under challenging terrain conditions,” the Army said.

An ad-hoc incident control centre was swiftly established at the site under the Commanding Officer of a battalion of DOGRA Regiment to coordinate rescue and relief efforts. “A total of 10 teams, comprising personnel from DOGRA Regiment and Gorkha Rifles, were mobilised for the operation,” it said.

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the loss of lives in the accident. “An *ex gratia* of ₹2 lakh from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each deceased, while the injured would be given ₹50,000,” the Prime Minister’s Office said in a statement. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said the government would ensure a through investigation into the incident. He announced an *ex gratia* of ₹2 lakh to the next of kin of each deceased, ₹1 lakh to those seriously injured, and ₹25,000 to persons who sustained minor injuries.

9.8 lakh deletions in Odisha’s voter rolls after electoral mapping process

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

The names of as many as 9.8 lakh voters have been deleted from the electoral rolls in Odisha since the commencement of the elector mapping process ahead of the special intensive revision (SIR).

“Approximately 9.8 lakh deletions have been carried out by the Electoral Registration Officers since the commencement of the elector mapping process. However, a substantial number of complaints have been received regarding wrongful deletion of names, including cases where electors were found to be present and instances where booth-level officers had neither conducted field visits nor carried out proper verification prior to deletion,” the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) wrote to the Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) on April 18.

According to the Office of the CEO, around two lakh Form-7 applications received after April 2, 2026 have been kept on hold. PTI

According to the Office of the CEO, around two lakh Form-7 applications received after April 2 have been kept on hold. Form-7 is filed for objecting to the inclusion of another person or one’s own name on the electoral roll on specific grounds, including death, duplication, or shifting of residence.

The EROs have been instructed to carry out door-to-door survey, and physically verify the authenticity of voter rolls, which impacts final deletion.

“In case of death cases, names of deceased electors should be deleted only after due verification... Prior to deletion, notice must be served at the last known address of the elector,” the letter from the Office of the CEO said.

The EROs have also been asked that all Demographic Similar Entries cases must be thoroughly verified. “In cases of suspected duplicates or doubtful matches, notices should be issued to the concerned electors and due process must be followed before taking any action,” the letter said.

The EROs and Additional EROs or their authorised representatives should physically verify at least 50% of Form-7 applications received after April 2 by personally contacting the applicants. Moreover, notices must be served to the elector at the last known address, and all statutory procedures must be followed, the letter said.

In cases where deletion has already been carried out wrongfully, the elector should be re-enrolled immediately with due diligence and care, the Office of the CEO added.

“Upon completion of the verification process, the ERO will furnish a written certificate confirming that at least 50% of the cases have been physically verified and that all prescribed procedures have been duly followed prior to deletion,” the letter said.

SC to seek a report on the functioning of tribunals for SIR

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

There are 19 appellate tribunals constituted to hear appeals on the West Bengal electoral roll

The Supreme Court on Monday expressed initial reluctance to entertain a plea quoting media reports that the Election Commission (EC) has infused nearly seven lakh new voters through the Form 6 route into the West Bengal electoral roll long after it has been frozen, saying it did not want to embark on a “fishing inquiry”.

The reaction from a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant was in response to an oral mentioning made by senior advocate Menaka Guruswamy.

In a separate oral mentioning, senior advocate Devadatt Kamat submitted that the 19 appellate tribunals, constituted to hear appeals against both exclusions and inclusions from the State electoral roll following the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise, have not been “functioning” as yet. He also mentioned that only online applications were allowed.

The tribunals, composed of retired High Court Chief Justices and judges, were ordered to be constituted by the top court on March 10.

The court had declared that electors purged from the voter list but cleared by Appellate Tribunals by April 21 or 27 should be allowed to vote in the Assembly election.

On Monday, the court said it would get a report from the Calcutta High Court Chief Justice about the functioning of the tribunals.

Congress seeks probe into fresh killings in Manipur

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The party has submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister seeking intervention

The Congress on Monday demanded an immediate, time-bound probe into the latest killings in Manipur, including those of two children, and called for urgent peace measures, compensation for victims, and institutional reforms to restore normalcy in the violence-hit State.

Addressing a press conference, Inner Manipur MP A. Bimol Akoijam alleged that both the Centre and the State government had “abdicated responsibility” of protecting lives and ensuring peace. The party has submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking immediate intervention.

Referring to the April 7 incident at Tronglaobi village in Bishnupur district where two children were killed and their mother injured, Mr. Akoijam termed it a “gruesome reminder” of continuing insecurity.

He also cited a separate firing incident at a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) post in Gelmon village that left three persons dead and several injured.

‘Restore normalcy’

“The violence on April 7 is a reminder that the situation is not under control. It would be a dishonest pretension if one thinks that violence has come down in Manipur,” Mr. Akoijam said, adding that the Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee had submitted a fresh memorandum to the Governor.

Calling for accountability, the party demanded a time-bound investigation into the Tronglaobi killings and strict action against armed groups and individuals involved in violence. It urged the government to restore normalcy in affected districts.

A day before inauguration by PM Modi, fire breaks out at Rajasthan refinery

Saptaparno Ghosh
BALTORA

A fire broke out in a refinery-cum-petrochemical complex in Rajasthan’s Baltora district on Monday afternoon, a day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi was to inaugurate it.

Confirming the incident, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) said that the fire took place in the vicinity of the crude distillation unit of the HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Limited (HRRL) refinery. Consequently, the inauguration has been postponed.

Thick smoke rises from the HPCL Pachpadra Refinery in Baltora district, Rajasthan, on Monday. PTI

No casualties

“Due to an unfortunate fire incident today in the vicinity of the crude distillation unit at the HRRL refinery, the scheduled dedication of the refinery by the Honourable Prime Minister on April 21 has been postponed,” the Ministry said on social media. “A revised date for the dedication will be announced in due course,” it added. The Ministry confirmed that there have been no reports of any casualties, and an investigation has been ordered to ascertain the cause and suggest remedial measures. It stated that the fire has been bought under control.

The HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Limited (HRRL) refinery, located in the Balotra district of Rajasthan, is a greenfield refinery-cum-petrochemical complex with an overall capacity of 9 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA) with 2.4 MMTPA accounting for its petrochemical production capacity.

HRRL is a ₹79,459 crore joint venture between HPCL and the Government of Rajasthan, with the latter holding an equity stake of 26%.

Bhajanlal Sharma, Chief Minister of Rajasthan, in a social media post, described the situation as “unfortunate”. Separately, he added in his post, “The grand inauguration of this refinery, which is a symbol of hope for the people of the State, would soon be done by the Honourable Prime Minister himself.”

Activists allege MCC violation in PM’s address

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

More than 700 civil society activists, former bureaucrats and academics have written to the Election Commission alleging violation of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the national address he delivered on women’s reservation on April 18.

In a letter addressed to the Chief Election Commissioner dated April 20, the activists demanded an inquiry into Mr. Modi’s address, claiming that it was a “clear and blatant” violation of the MCC. The use of official government machinery by the Prime Minister, “for what amounted to electioneering” during the operation of the MCC, constituted its “serious breach”, it said.

The letter was signed by Congress leader Digvijaya Singh, former bureaucrats Najeeb Jung and M.G. Devasahayam, musician T.M. Krishna, and activists Anjali Bhardwaj and Yogendra Yadav, among others.

ASSEMBLY POLLS

'Diaspora backs BJP in Bengal, keen to invest'

The BJP on Monday claimed that the Bengali diaspora was in favour of a regime change in West Bengal and willing to invest in the State. Addressing a press conference in Kolkata, BJP State president Samik Bhattacharya alleged that the ruling Trinamool Congress "failed" to create an investment-friendly environment, leading to an "exodus of companies from the State".

He said Bengalis working in countries such as the U.S., the U.K., Australia, and Singapore lent support to the saffron party, asserting that a "change in West Bengal has become imperative".

The BJP is the only investment-friendly party, Mr. Bhattacharya said. Members of the Overseas Friends of BJP also joined the press conference of the party leader virtually. PTI

Samik Bhattacharya says the BJP will make West Bengal more investment-friendly.

23% Bengal poll candidates face criminal cases

Around 23% of the candidates in the fray for the West Bengal Assembly polls, have declared criminal cases against themselves, according to the Association for Democratic Reforms. The poll watchdog analysed affidavits of 2,920 candidates and found that a total of 683 candidates had declared criminal cases.

Out of the 1,475 candidates in Phase 1, 345 (23%) have declared criminal cases, while 294 (20%) have declared serious criminal cases. In Phase 2, out of 1,445 candidates analysed, 338 (23%) have declared criminal cases, while 295 (20%) have declared serious criminal cases. Of the candidates analysed, 208 of 293 from the BJP, 112 of 290 from the Trinamool Congress, 94 of 198 from the CPI(M), and 70 of 293 from the Congress have declared criminal cases.

"To fight atrocities against women, we will create a 'Durga Squad', and anyone who troubles women will be given strict punishment

RAJNATH SINGH
Defence Minister

T.N. polls: EC makes seizures worth ₹1,200 cr.

Tamil Nadu Chief Electoral Officer Archana Patnaik on Monday said that surveillance teams have so far seized cash, gold and silver articles, gift materials, liquor and drugs, worth over ₹1,200 crore across the State. As on April 20, a total of ₹169.85 crore in cash was seized from various places in the State. PTI

"Women's quota Bill was passed in 2023. But Modi slept over it for 30 months only to wake up before the West Bengal and Tamil Nadu polls

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE
Congress president

Rahul Gandhi addressing a poll campaign meeting at Sawyerpuram in Thoothukudi on Monday. N. RAJESH

RSS is trying to rule T.N. by proxy, says Rahul Gandhi

The Hindu Bureau
NAGERCOIL/ THOOTHUKUDI/ TIRUNELVELI

Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Monday alleged that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is attempting to rule Tamil Nadu "by proxy".

Addressing a rally in Mandaikadu in support of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam-led Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA) candidates contesting across the six constituencies of Kanniyakumari district, he said: "The RSS is planning to, and trying to, rule Tamil Nadu by proxy. The same way Donald Trump [President of the United States] controls the Prime Minister of India, the Prime Minister of India wants to control Tamil Nadu through the AIADMK."

On the other hand, the DMK, Congress, and their allies "are defending Tamil language, culture, and history from the RSS", he said, adding the RSS "hates the Dravidian idea" because they know that Tamils can challenge them. Tamil Nadu has shown a progressive vision to the rest of the country, with the politics in the State historically rooted in social justice, he said. "We want Tamil Nadu to be run by the people of Tamil Nadu; the men and women of Tamil Nadu should decide its future," he said.

Mr. Gandhi further alleged that the BJP seeks to weaken the diversity of States. Referring to Manipur, he said wherever possible, the BJP attempts to capture power and govern a State from the national capital. Mr. Gandhi also alleged that the BJP does not have the courage to communicate this directly to the people of Tamil Nadu, but has instead taken control of the AIADMK, a "glorious political party" that has contributed to the development of the State.

Mr. Gandhi said the AIADMK once had leaders who truly represented the people of Tamil Nadu, but has now become an instrument for the BJP to enter Tamil Nadu. He alleged the leaders of the AIADMK has surrendered themselves to the BJP due to their corruption.

Personal connection

In the Srivaikuntam constituency in Thoothukkudi district, he highlighted his personal connection with Tamil Nadu. Mr. Gandhi said that this bond with the people of the State goes beyond politics and has continued across generations in his family. He assured that he would protect the interests of Tamil people, protect the Tamil language and ensure that Tamils have full representation in the country. Drawing comparisons with Bihar politics, Mr. Gandhi alleged the BJP aimed to establish a government in Tamil Nadu that would function under its control, and wants a Chief Minister who would act according to its direction. "No matter what dream they have, they will never ever control the people of Tamil Nadu," he said.

Campaigning at Nanguneri in Tirunelveli district, he said if the BJP really wanted the women's reservation Bill to be passed, it should table in Parliament the Bill presented in 2023 for which the entire Opposition will extend its support. He accused the the BJP of attempting to change the electoral map of the country in the guise of passing the Bill. "They were trying to change the number of seats each State gets. They were trying to reduce the representation of South India, northeast India, and of smaller states. They were attacking the idea of the Union of States. And that is why we defeated that Bill in Parliament. We will defeat it again and again," he said.

Political clashes trigger concern with just hours to go for polling in Bengal

Mamata Banerjee alleges 'selective' targeting of Trinamool workers in preventive arrests; EC and State police take down over 11,000 social media posts since announcement of polls; Trinamool files complaint over 'arbitrary' deployment of Central forces without providing valid reasons

IN FOCUS

Shrabana Chatterjee
KOLKATA

With reports of clashes in key Assembly constituencies in West Bengal surfacing on Monday, there is concern over the free and fair conduct of the election in the State.

A clash erupted at a rally of the Indian Secular Front (ISF) in Bhangar when Trinamool Congress supporters staged protests and tried to block it. The rally was led by ISF candidate Nawshad Siddique, MLA. Trinamool supporters, who had gathered in large numbers, raised "Joy Bangla" slogan, directed at the rally.

ISF supporters retaliated by shouting "thief, thief" slogan, at the Trinamool workers. The police had to resort to a baton-charge to bring the situation under control. Bhangar has been a hotbed of political violence with regular clashes between Trinamool and ISF supporters.

A similar clash between Trinamool and Bharatiya Janata Party workers was reported in Nandigram as both parties complained of attacks by each other. As tensions prevailed, Central forces reached the spot to bring the situation under control.

A crude bomb was recovered from outside the house of a BJP worker in the Natabari area of Cooch Behar district.

In a related development, a Trinamool worker was injured after he was shot at by unidentified miscreants in the Gosaba area of Sundarbans on Sunday night.

With only two days left for polling in the first phase of the high-stakes election on April 23, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee came down heavily on the alleged "selective" targeting of Trinamool workers.

A pre-emptive list of miscreants, reportedly made by the Election Commission and circulating on informal social media groups, was heavily criticised by Ms. Banerjee.

"We will fight these issues at every inch. The list that is circulating, I got hold of it from a source... They are only targeting the TMC, as if TMC workers are only thieves and the BJP people are all innocent," the Chief Minister said at a public rally on Monday.

Trinamool MP and senior advocate Kalyan Banerjee has moved the Calcutta High Court, in anticipation of the arrest of over 800 Trinamool workers before the election. He has raised an apprehension that as part of preventive arrests, many party workers may be held without cause.

Mr. Banerjee has asked the Chief Justice of the High Court to take immediate action on the issue. The court has agreed to hear the matter, and is likely to take it up on an urgent basis.

As a pre-emptive measure, the West Bengal Police arrested 135 criminals on Sunday night. Since the announcement of the polls, the EC took down at least 11,000 misleading social media posts, "with West Bengal Cyber Crime Wing taking down 7,936 posts", a police statement said on Sunday.

High alert: A total of 2,400 companies of Central forces have been deployed in West Bengal, more than double the number deployed during the 2021 election. ANI

Heightened security

On Saturday, the Central Armed Police Forces held meetings with the Directors-General of the forces to ensure free and fair elections in the State. The meeting was attended by top officials of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) whose personnel have been deployed across the State ahead of the election.

"Our mission in West Bengal transcends routine security; it is about safeguarding the sanctity of the ballot," Praveer Ranjan, Director-general, CISF, said.

In all, 2,400 companies of Central forces have been deployed in the State, which is more than double the number deployed during the 2021 election.

Complaint filed

However, this drew criticism from the Trinamool leadership as Mahua Moitra, MP, accused the BJP and Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar of planning a military-style takeover of the State.

The Trinamool filed an official complaint with the EC against the "arbitrary" deployment of the Central forces without providing valid reasons to recognised political parties for the deployment.

"The complete absence of disclosure gives rise to grave apprehensions of selective targeting and misuse of discretion," the complaint filed by the Trinamool on Monday read.

Both switched role from actor to politician, but comparing MGR and Vijay is a facile act

Ramya Kannan
CHENNAI

Odious as comparisons are, it is impossible to avoid them during election season. Parties and leaders, their manifestos, agendas, welfare schemes, ideologies, sartorial elegance, or lack of it too, are often analysed at great length in attempts to understand the political lay of the land in the present through the lens of the past. This election, in Tamil Nadu in 2026, one comparison that could scarcely be ignored is the well-worn likening between Vijay, the actor-turned politician, and M.G. Ramachandran, the State's former Chief Minister.

However, this is a facile comparison. All comparisons stop at the single original fact that both were actors who took the political route, jumping into elections when the chance came up. K. Hariharan, author, film-maker and academic, explains why this is so: "Elections are not a first day, first show phenomenon. It is important that people planning to jump into the electoral fray test the waters first. As MGR did – he spent a long time in politics before he launched the AIADMK."

MGR spent years in politics and the DMK before deciding to launch his party. His entry into politics was carefully crafted, a song in every film in Dravidian propaganda mode, and his formulaic films elevating him as the hero of the downtrodden. It was in 1967, three elections after its debut, that the DMK established a government in the State. Among the factors that facilitated this was of course the anti-Hindi agitation in the State, Congress leader K. Kamaraj's decision to step down to attend to party affairs, and the sympathy wave that resulted out of MGR being shot at by actor M.R. Radha.

After differences rose between MGR and M. Karunanidhi, who had taken over the DMK leadership, the former broke off and formed his party – the AIADMK – in 1972, creating the political Dravidian duopoly in the State that was to continue a long while. The AIADMK's debut election in 1977 turned out to be a spectacular success, one of the best political debuts in the State and country. In its very first State-level contest, it defeated the incumbent DMK and entrenched itself into the Dravidian landscape. It is this success that has spurred some commentators to fallaciously connect with Mr. Vijay's entry into politics.

"Apart from the fact that they are both popular actors in Tamil cinema, further comparisons between MGR and Mr. Vijay turn sour," Mr. Hariharan says. While MGR used a formulaic cinematic model to build the image of a leader of the masses, Mr. Vijay's cinematic career was devoid of this kind of construct. He was a lone player, hardly attending political events or media interviews, developing his popularity, in a sense, through a closely guarded, nearly sequestered personal life. "Mr. Vijay had no boots on the ground, until he formed the TVK, the political party. Without a rich experience of working with the people, he still has posited himself as the alternative to parties that have had decades of grassroots experience."

But if we need to make comparisons, then one between Mr. Vijay and Telugu Desam Party founder and former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao might actually have more points of intersection, Mr. Hariharan says.

In the spotlight: Vijay during an election campaign rally for TVK candidates in Chennai's Anna Nagar on Monday. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

Andhra pride issue

"NTR had expressed his wish to come into politics many a times to film journalists who used to travel with him, but frankly nobody took him seriously," explains Dasu Kesava Rao, former head, *The Hindu*'s Andhra Pradesh bureau.

One story goes that NTR wanted a seat in the Legislative Council, but the then Chief Minister, Anjayya, did not warm to the idea. It is said that NTR's political ambitions were ignited when he was invited to the swearing-in of Bhavanam Venkatrami Reddy as Chief Minister. He launched the TDP in March 1982, and within nine months, he won the election and was established as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, riding in on the failure of the Congress and the Janata Party in the State. He invoked the Andhra pride issue, riding the Telugu regionalism factor right through.

Another cinema-star turned politician from Andhra Pradesh, Chiranjeevi, also launched his party a year before the first election he contested in. The Praja Rajyam Party (PRP) was founded by the Telugu film actor on August 26, 2008, with the avowed aim of providing a people-centric alternative to the existing political establishment.

A mammoth crowd gathered at the launch of the party in Tirupati. Does that sound familiar? If you are looking for more similarities, at a political rally of the PRP in Dharmavaram, a stampede occurred, killing two persons, and injuring several, while for Mr. Vijay the fell swoop came at a political rally in Karur.

The path in front of Mr. Vijay is then the poetic two roads that diverged in a yellow wood. The decision to start on the journey alone is his; which road he takes may not depend on him directly, though as a consequence of his actions, the one he is propelled down on.

EC will ensure free, fair and transparent election in Bengal: CEC

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

With two days to go for the first phase of the Assembly election in West Bengal, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar on Monday said elections in the State would be held in a "free and transparent" manner.

"In these elections of West Bengal, ECI (Election Commission of India) will leave no stone unturned to hold free, fair and transparent elections," Mr. Kumar said in a statement.

The election would be "fear free, violence free, intimidation free, inducement free, *chappa* (voter reaches the booth to find his vote already cast) free, booth-jamming free, source-jamming free", he added.

The EC would ensure that no employee of the State government, local bodies, or autonomous bodies influenced the electoral process, Mr. Kumar said. "Each and every elector of West Bengal should exercise his/her vote in a fearless manner," he added.

The Assembly elections in West Bengal will be held in two phases, on April 23 and 29. Counting will be held on May 4.

INBRIEF

Railways to operate 908 special trains during summer

The Railways has said that it will operate 908 special trains during the summer to address the anticipated rise in passenger demand from April 15 to July 15 due to vacations, festivals, and peak travel months. These trains will operate 18,262 trips to cater to the increased travel demand. Out of these, 660 trains have already been notified, accounting for 11,294 trips, ensuring that a substantial portion of the planned services is already available for passenger booking and travel planning well in advance. The Central Railway with 3,082 trips has emerged as the top zone with maximum summer special train trips.

20 convicted, 25 acquitted in 2018 Assam mob lynching case

A District and Sessions Court in central Assam on Monday convicted 20 people in connection with the mob lynching of two Guwahati-based youth in Karbi Anglong district almost eight years ago. The court acquitted 25 other accused for lack of sufficient evidence. Abhijit Nath and Nilotpal Das died after 150-200 villagers assaulted them while they were returning from Kangthilangshu falls, which they visited as part of their environmental study. According to prosecution, Nath and Das were attacked on suspicion of being child lifters, a rumour circulating on social media at the time. Despite identifying themselves and pleading for their lives, they were assaulted in public view.

Pawan Khera moves Gauhati HC seeking anticipatory bail

Congress leader Pawan Khera approached the Gauhati High Court on Monday, seeking anticipatory bail in connection with a criminal case registered against him by the Assam police's Crime Branch in Guwahati. The case is based on an FIR lodged by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, after Mr. Khera claimed that she possessed passports of three countries, owned luxury properties in Dubai, and had significant investments in Wyoming, the United States. The court listed the Congress leader's plea for hearing on Tuesday. Mr. Khera made the claims at press conferences in New Delhi and Guwahati on April 5.

26 candidates bag perfect 100 NTA score in JEE-Main test

Twenty-six candidates have bagged a perfect 100 NTA score in the engineering entrance exam JEE-Main, the National Testing Agency (NTA) announced on Monday. Over 13 lakh candidates appeared in the first edition of the exam in January and more than 10 lakh candidates in the second edition in April. Over eight lakh common candidates appeared in both sessions. Among the candidates who secured an NTA score of 100, five each are from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana followed by four from Rajasthan, three from Delhi, two each from Maharashtra and Haryana, and one candidate each from Chandigarh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Gujarat. All are males. PTI

India's forests could nearly double carbon storage by 2100, study finds

The findings, published in *Environmental Research: Climate*, involved researchers from Indian institutes; biggest increases in vegetation carbon are projected in desert and semi-arid zones across Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, study says

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

India's forests could store nearly twice as much carbon by the end of this century as they do now if current greenhouse gas emission trends continue, according to a new modelling study published this week in the journal *Environmental Research: Climate*.

The findings, involving researchers from multiple Indian institutes, present a granular forecast of how climate change will reshape the country's forest carbon stocks. Significantly, they diverge in important ways from official estimates compiled by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) - the official source of tree and forest cover data in India.

For this study, the authors used modelling to peer into the future and found that vegetation carbon biomass rises by 35% under a low-emissions future, 62% under a medium-emissions pathway, and as much as 97% under a high-emissions, fossil-fuel-intensive scenario by 2100. Till about 2030, all of the scenarios project roughly the same quantities of vegetation after which they diverge sharply – the steepest acceleration occurring after 2050.

Wake-up call: Climate change is silently rewriting every sector, including our forests, say scientists. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The projected increases are driven primarily by two interacting forces: rising precipitation and elevated atmospheric CO_2. Higher rainfall, projected across much of India under all emissions scenarios, translates to more moisture available for trees to grow. Simultaneously, more available carbon dioxide means enhancing photosynthesis and water-use efficiency. Rainfall effects appear with a lag of roughly two years under low and medium emissions, extending to about four years under the high-emissions scenario to account for the fact that forests do not respond instantly to a single wet year, and that woody biomass accumulates slowly over time.

"Climate change is not just about rising temperatures – it is silently rewriting every sector, including our forests," said lead author Fathima Fitha. "Even where gains appear, they may mask deeper stresses, raising concerns about the stability of today's dense forests and the risk of releasing large stores of carbon. Human pressures, land-use change, and extreme events such as wildfires, droughts, and heatwaves are intensifying these risks. If we undermine our forests today, we risk amplifying emissions tomorrow."

The largest relative increases are projected not in India's established forest heartlands but in its driest margins. Desert and semi-arid zones across Rajasthan, Gujarat, western Madhya Pradesh, and adjoining dry interiors are expected to see vegetation carbon rise by more than 60% compared to historical levels under high emissions. The Trans-Himalayas, the Gangetic forest belt, and the Deccan Peninsula follow. The Western Ghats and the Himalayas – India's most biodiverse and ecologically significant forest zones – are projected to see comparatively smaller relative increases, constrained by ecological saturation and specific climatic pressures those regions face, the study shows.

The increase in vegetation doesn't mean that climate change is acting as a net good, the researchers warned, as the models do not capture disruptive forces such as deforestation, land conversion, fire, and pest outbreaks intensified by warming.

CBI arrests 2 executives of RCom in bank fraud case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The CBI has arrested two senior executives of Reliance Communications Limited (RCom) in connection with a case alleging wrongful loss of about ₹2,929.05 crore to the SBI, the CBI said on Monday.

The accused, D. Vishwanath and Anil Kalya, are linked to a case registered by the CBI in August 2025 against RCom, its former director Anil Ambani and others, following a complaint lodged by the SBI.

The complaint alleged a total wrongful loss of ₹19,694.33 crore to 17 public sector banks/ financial institutions. "Investigation has so far revealed that RCom Ltd. entered into circuitous transactions through shell entities controlled by the company's officials and also got discounted LCs (Letters of Credit) opened for "bogus service-related transactions with its group entities, which got devolved, causing huge loss to the banks," the agency said.

Allahabad HC judge recuses from Rahul Gandhi case

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Criticising the petitioner's social media posts casting aspersions against his court, the Allahabad High Court judge, who was hearing the plea filed over the alleged British citizenship of Rahul Gandhi, recused himself from the case on Monday.

The development came from the Bench of Justice Subhash Vidyarthi of the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad HC, who was hearing a plea filed by a Karnataka-based BJP worker, Vignesh Shishir. The court had directed the filing of an FIR against Mr. Gandhi on April 17. In a subsequent written order, the Bench noted that the Congress leader might be entitled to a hearing before any final decision is taken.

During the hearing on Monday, the court observed that the petitioner had publicly suggested "foul play" on part of the court and it did not deem it appropriate to hear the matter any further.

Doval's Riyadh visit on PM's instructions, part of govt. outreach to Gulf, says MEA

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval's surprise one-day visit to Riyadh was part of an outreach by the government amid a tense phase in the West Asian conflict, and took place, according to the Ministry of External Affairs, on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's instructions.

The NSA's visit was announced late on Sunday night by the MEA, at the end of his meetings with a number of senior Ministers. In Riyadh, Mr. Doval held talks with his counterpart, National Security Adviser Musaed Al-Aiban. He also met Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman Al Saud, both princes in the Saudi royal family.

"On the directions of the Prime Minister, our outreach to countries in the Gulf continues," said MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, describing the visit at a multi-ministerial briefing on Monday. "[Mr. Doval's] meetings were helpful to exchange views and review bilateral ties, and also exchange views on the regional situation and other issues of mutual interest," he added.

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval with Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan in Riyadh. ANI

Mr. Doval's travel to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia came a week after External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's two-day visit to the United Arab Emirates (April 11-12), and Energy Minister Hardeep Puri's earlier visit to Qatar (April 9-10), and is understood to have been part of the government's desire to shore up ties with India's major oil and gas suppliers amidst a possible energy crisis, as well as emphasise a more balanced approach towards the region during the war.

In a statement, the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the talks between the Saudi Foreign Minister and Mr. Doval had reviewed areas of India-Saudi cooperation, "alongside a discussion of the latest developments in the regional situation and an exchange of viewpoints regarding it".

No interim relief for Nida Khan, next hearing on April 27

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit
MUMBAI

A local court in Nashik did not grant interim relief to suspended TCS employee Nida Khan on her application seeking anticipatory bail. It issued notices to the respondents and asked the Nashik Police to file their reply on the application by April 27 when the court will hear the matter again.

Another court in Nashik sent Ms. Khan's co-accused Raza Memon and Shafi Sheikh to 14-day judicial custody after their police custody ended.

In-camera hearing

The Nashik court held Ms. Khan's hearing in-camera. "As the complainant is a woman and this is a rape case, the proceedings were held in-camera to protect the identity of the complainant," Baba Sayed representing Ms. Khan, told *The Hindu* from Nashik.

The lawyers representing Ms. Khan told the court that she is pregnant, and since she does not have any criminal history, there is no need for her custodial interrogation. They said that Ms. Khan has been falsely implicated and that there was a delay of two to three years in registering the FIR.

They argued that though sections of Prevention of Atrocities Act have been invoked in the FIR, it does not imply that an arrest is imminent, adding that the sections do not apply to her.

Being targeted

Ms. Khan's lawyers said that she was being targeted and was under stress due to the loss of her job. "She did not hurt the complainant's sentiments on purpose," the lawyers said.

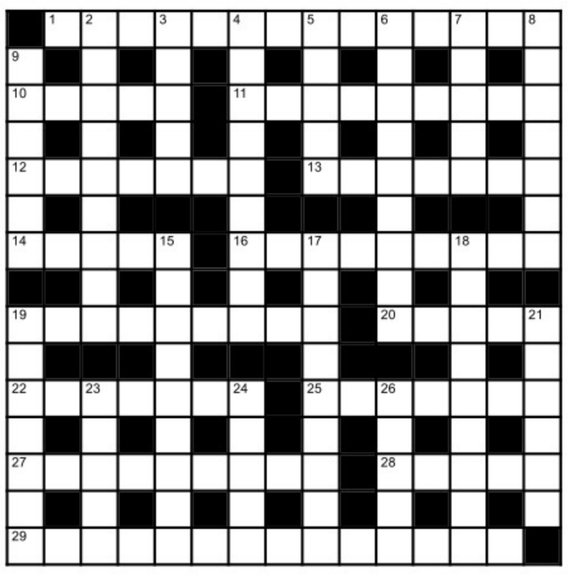
But the government pleader submitted that the offence against her is serious and alleged that Ms. Khan had actively participated in the crime. He said the offence is sensitive and related to atrocities against a woman and sought time from the court to file the government's reply.

TH CROSSWORD + 14773

(set by Pixie Dust)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://thehindu.com/crosswords*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Old cake chewed several times in a nursery rhyme! (4-1-6-3)
10 Phantom and beloved leader of Freljord cycling (5)
11 Warrant for a soldier's slogan? (6,3)
12 It's absurd, cheat is stealing Knight's tape (5-2)
13 Oafs fly? Suspect dismissals (7)
14 An adult insect's study of mind (5)
16 Poor wife is hot and sickly (9)
19 Cryptically could I set something most murky? (9)
20 Brand mounted without hype in the end (5)
22 Yes! Sen ceased to smuggle substance (7)
25 Love poem with English guide (7)
27 Mariner (colony resident) uncomfortable at first with return of a large spider (9)
28 Contesting extremely vapoury gin cocktail (5)
29 Pi loves sex and dangerous stuff? (4,10)

Down

2 Old boy Harry got bail and sponsorship (9)
3 From the beginning King never appreciated Chief Kattappa's talent (5)
4 Bond's drone we hear is in the grips of an implant (9)
5 Outcast weasel regularly ignored characters in a number system (5)
6 Spooner expresses surprise and lingers in lounges! (9)
7 In recess resisted beverage (5)
8 Heard about Indian Classical Dance's epic journey (7)
9 Naughty smile describing basically unpalatable food (6)
15 Fiat, Quebec Nani drove essentially in reverse (9)
17 Controversial party game? (3,6)
18 Camouflaged terrapins come to light (9)
19 Caught a shark, a zooming beast (7)
21 Discover medical practitioner on line (6)
23 Superb! Iago appearing in every other shoot (5)
24 Prepare one-liner supporting establishment at first (5)
26 To some extent clergymen voice author's concluding words (5)

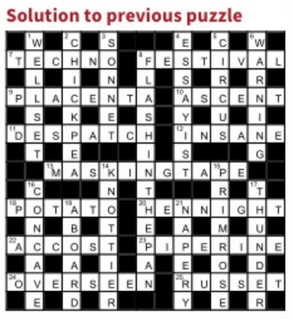
SUDOKU

	2	3		5	9		4	
		1		2				5
		9		8				6
7	9							
			2		5			
							1	8
4				3		9		
3				6		7		
	1		8	7		4	6	

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

No.SS6857 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

4	2	1	3	6	7	5	9	8
8	6	3	9	4	5	1	2	7
5	9	7	1	2	8	4	3	6
3	4	8	2	5	9	7	6	1
7	5	6	8	3	1	2	4	9
2	1	9	6	7	4	3	8	5
9	7	2	4	1	6	8	5	3
1	8	4	5	9	3	6	7	2
6	3	5	7	8	2	9	1	4

FAITH

Adi Sankara: guiding light

Adi Sankara, rated as one of the top philosophers, who propounded the Advaita philosophy (Paramatma and Jivatma are one and the material world is nothing but maya or illusion), is unparalleled and continues to remain relevant. Devotees may attribute various forms to Paramatma, but He is One. An ordinary devotee can gain true insight of the above philosophy only through jnana, said B. Damodhara Deekshithar. This in itself is complete only when the devotee gets the blessings of a guru.

One may think that one can gain jnana from perusing books or through experiences; however, unless one gains the grace of a guru, such jnana is incomplete. One can gain the guru's grace in any of the three ways: through touch, through guru's eyes falling on one and remaining for a few minutes on one, and through the mind of a guru focusing on a devotee's mind from afar. A bird always sits on its egg (touch), nourishing it. When the mother fish turns and looks at its new hatchlings, it is enough to satiate their hunger. When Dhruv set out to the forest for tapas, in order to become the leader of the universe, he came across Narada, who gently placed his head on the young lad's head: Dhruv gained jnana. As an eight-year old, Adi Sankara himself went in search of a guru on embracing sanyasa on receiving his mother's permission. He travelled to Omkareshwar and received initiation from Govinda Bhagavatpada.

Devotees ask if one should seek a guru or acharya. A guru is one who dispels agnana while an acharya is one who shows the disciple the right path. Adi Sankara was both guru and acharya, and therefore unparalleled.

INBRIEF

Hyundai, TVS partner for commercialisation of E3W

Hyundai Motor Company and TVS Motor Company on Monday said they have signed a joint development agreement to advance the development and commercialisation of electric three-wheeler solutions designed specifically to address India's last-mile mobility needs. The partnership has been formalised after the successful presentation of the E3W concept at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025, the two companies said in a joint statement. PTI

Apple pauses data in antitrust case, CCI sets final hearing

Apple has not submitted data sought by India's antitrust body after an investigation found the U.S. firm abused its dominant position in the iPhone apps market, prompting the watchdog to fast-track a decision on penalties to a final hearing next month, an order shows. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) said in an April 8 order that Apple has not submitted details of its financials and its views on the investigation since October 2024. REUTERS

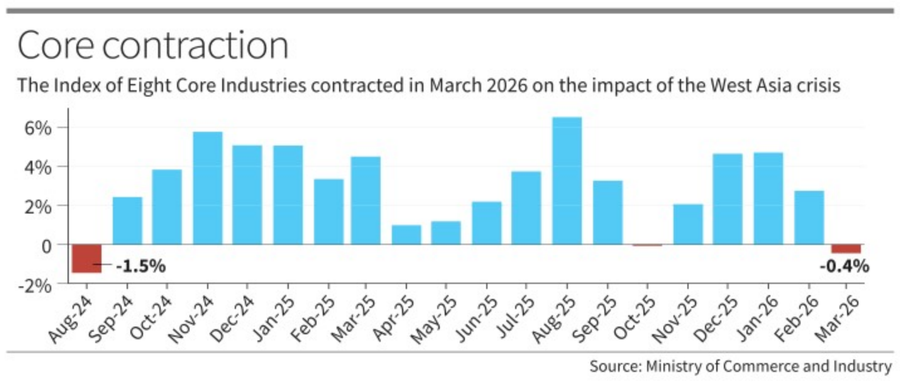
Officials seize suspected counterfeit Mounjaro pens

Indian drug regulators seized more than 260 suspected counterfeit pens of Eli Lilly's obesity and diabetes drug Mounjaro and said the main accused had ordered raw materials from vendors on Chinese e-commerce platform Alibaba. Officials on Saturday recovered the suspected fake pens from a vehicle on the outskirts of New Delhi and arrested two people accused of making and selling the drugs, the Haryana Food and Drug Control Administration said in a statement.

Core sector activity contracts 0.4% in March on war impact

Government data show that four out of the eight core sectors of the economy contracted in March 2026; growth in the full year of 2025-26 was the lowest since the COVID-19 pandemic

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI



Activity in India's eight core industrial sectors contracted by 0.4% in March 2026, the first month after the war in West Asia broke out, according to data released by the government. This was the poorest performance for the sectors in 19-months.

The data on the Index of Eight Core Industries released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Monday also showed that growth in the index stood at 2.6% for the full year 2025-26, the lowest since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21.

In March 2026, the data showed that four out of the eight sectors measured in the index contracted over their levels in March last year. "While an adverse base weighed on electricity generation, a shortage of inputs amidst the West Asia crisis curtailed the fertiliser output, which plunged by an unprecedented 24.6% year-on-year in the month," Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at ratings agency ICRA said.

The fertiliser sector ended the year 2025-26 with a contraction of 0.1% as compared with a growth of 2.9% in 2024-25, which itself was the lowest since 2021-22.

The electricity sector contracted 0.5% in March 2026 on a relatively high base of 7.5% growth in March 2025. Over the course of 2025-26, the sector grew 0.9%, down from 5.2% in 2024-25.

"Besides, the growth in steel and cement output also weakened in March 2026 relative to February 2026, suggesting that construction activity slowed in the month," Ms. Nayar added.

Steel growth slumps

The steel sector saw growth slump to an 18-month low of 2.2% in March 2026, while the cement sector slowed to a 17-month low of 4%.

The only sector to see relatively robust growth in March 2026 was the natural gas sector, which grew 6.4% as the government pushed oil marketing companies to increase their output in reaction to the constraints brought on by the West Asia crisis.

The crude oil sector, on the other hand, contracted by 5.7% in March 2026, the seventh consecutive month of contraction.

The coal sector contracted by 4% in March 2026, while the refinery products sector grew by 0.1% that month.

Smooth transition: E85 is a fuel blend made of up to 85% ethanol and 15% petrol (gasoline) REUTERS

Draft rules for roll-out of Ethanol 85 fuel to be notified soon

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

The government will "very soon" issue draft rules on the roll-out of Ethanol 85 (E85) as vulnerabilities in oil exports exposed during the West Asia crisis sharpen the focus on alternative fuels, a senior government official said. While a final date is yet to be decided, the official said the roll-out is expected "in a couple of years".

E85 is a fuel blend made of up to 85% ethanol and 15% petrol (gasoline).

"Draft regulations will be notified very soon. There is consensus within the government. There is also market consensus and preliminary testing too has been carried out," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The E85 blend will be introduced as a separate fuel grade, distinct from E20, in which ethanol blending could go up to 27%, which is permissible under a notification issued in 2023, the official explained.

High levels of ethanol blending offer several benefits, including "greater energy security for the country and a reduction in vehicular pollution," the official said.

Such a high-ethanol fuel will require dedicated engine compatibility, as well as separate dispensing infrastructure at fuel pumps that will also dispense E20 petrol.

An engine designed to run on E85 can also operate on lower ethanol blends, including E60 and E50.

On competing demands for ethanol-blended fuel, including from aviation, where India has a 1% blending target in aviation turbine fuel for international flights under the International Civil Aviation Organization's plan to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, the official said there was "surplus" ethanol available in the country.

The government has mandated the sale of petrol with up to 20% ethanol across all States and Union Territories from April 1.

SEBI amends alternative investment fund rules

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

SEBI has sharply reduced the minimum investment required from individual investor in social impact funds to ₹1,000 from ₹2 lakh, to widen retail participation on the Social Stock Exchange (SSE).

This would align the minimum application size requirement for subscribing to Zero Coupon Zero Principal Instruments under SEBI's Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements Regulations, 2018 with the minimum investment value requirement for individual investors in Social Impact Fund.

Earlier, AIF rules required individual investors to invest a minimum of ₹2 lakh in a social impact fund that invests in securities of NPOs listed or registered on the SSE.

Now, in its notification dated April 16, SEBI reduced this threshold to ₹1,000. To give effect to this, it amended the Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) rules. Additionally, SEBI said AIFs, which do not retain any funds after the expiry of their fund life, may be permitted to seek an "inoperative" status, subject to compliance with prescribed norms.

FY26 pharma exports up 2% even as March saw dip

N. Ravi Kumar
HYDERABAD

India's pharmaceutical exports rose more than 2% year-on-year to $31.11 billion in FY26 despite a 23% slide in March amid the fallout of the West Asia war.

A new record, the exports bettered the $30.47 billion registered in 2024-25. March incidentally had played a crucial role in shaping the overall FY25 performance as shipments to the all-important U.S. market surged in the face of an impending higher tariff regime.

U.S. tariffs played an important role in pharma export impact.

In March 2026, pharma exports declined as much as 23.17% to $2,828.60 million ($3,681.66 million), official numbers showed. The downturn was largely concentrated in the final quarter, driven by logistics disruptions and tariff-related uncertainties, a highly placed source said.

U.S. market pressure

Exports to the U.S, in particular, came under significant pressure, as the war disrupted shipping. U.S. tariff worries remained in 2025-26 too and there were concerns over potential tariffs on branded patented drugs manufactured outside the US. Generic medicines retain a cushion, for now, an official said.

The impact of the evolving situation was not completely unexpected. Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal had told a meeting here earlier this month while "we are likely to land up better than last year," but the $32 billion target set for FY26 is unlikely to be achieved. The performance in rupee terms may still be better given the the currency depreciation."

Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India chairman Namit Joshi, who earlier estimated the March exports to be lower at anywhere between $250 million to $500 million due to the war impact, had said FY26 exports will be "somewhere near to last year achievement".

Up to February, the exports were nearly $28.29 billion. "We have already achieved 5.6% growth up to February," Pharmexcil DG Raja Bhanu had said.

'Upgrading India-Korea trade pact for balanced partnership'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The decision by India and South Korea to upgrade Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) is aimed at moving towards a more balanced economic partnership and one not defined by huge trade deficits, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said.

Earlier, PM Narendra Modi and South Korean President Lee Jae Myung announced the signing of many MoUs and the pact to upgrade the CEPA.

Addressing India-Korea Business Forum, Mr. Goyal said, "The fact we have a rapidly rising middle class with significant increase in their incomes, all of these make for a very good destination for Korean investment, Korean manufacturing," Mr. Goyal said.

"Our bilateral trade is about $27 billion," he said.

"We have been tasked by our two leaders that we should double this by 2030. So, we're looking at about 18% growth if we have to double it in the next four years," he added.

During his speech at the Business Forum, Mr. Lee said the bilateral trade between the two countries was not "large enough considering the size of India's economy."

There is a need to prioritise biofuel for aviation: IATA

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

Indian aviation's clean fuel transition must hinge on treating mobility as one integrated system and allocating limited feedstock more efficiently by prioritising biofuels such as ethanol for air transport as automobiles have more viable alternatives like electrification available, as per International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Under Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) roadmap, India set phased blending targets of 1% by 2027, 2% by 2028 and 5% by 2030 for international flights, aligning with the goal of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for achieving net-zero carbon emission from international aviation by 2050.

"India is well placed to meet short-term demand (for SAF) but for long-term needs there is a need for diversification and rationalisation of feedstock allocation for different sectors to avoid all ethanol being used by road transport,"

Preeti Jain

Preeti Jain, IATA head, net zero research & programme, told *The Hindu* in an interview from Geneva. Without prioritisation, the risk is aviation firms invest heavily in SAF capacity only to face ethanol shortages.

Biggest opportunity

A government commissioned report presented before ICAO General Assembly last year titled "Feasibility Study on SAF" identified SAF output via alcohol-to-jet (AtJ) process as the biggest opportunity for India.

The report cautioned competing demand for ethanol from road transport must be carefully managed as automobiles had many alternative fuel options, whereas aviation did not. But availability of input in the form of feedstock was not a constraint.

"We did a global feedstock assessment study which showed India was a hotspot and 10% of global bio feed stock was available in India. But I don't think even 2% or 3% of it is being now used," Dr Jain said.

As per IATA's Global Feedstock Assessment for SAF Production Outlook to 2050, India, U.S., Brazil and Europe were likely to dominate SAF biomass feedstock for SAF with 105 million tonne (mt) available by 2030 and 154 mt by 2050 out of a total requirement of 500 mt.

The aviation industry's key concern is the high cost of SAF, which could push up airfares, as it is now three to five times more expensive than conventional jet fuel. Dr. Jain said the issue can be addressed by subsidies for production and adoption by airlines.

GIFT City finance hub grants first family office permit

Reuters
MUMBAI

It underscores GIFT City's aim to build a globally-competitive ecosystem for foreign family office

India's Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) has issued its first license to establish a family investment fund, marking a significant step in managing private wealth within the financial hub.

Permit was granted to Poornam Asset Management IFSC Pvt. Ltd., according to a GIFT City financial regulatory authority official who was not authorised to speak to the media.

The move underscores GIFT City's aim to build a globally-competitive and flexible regulatory ecosystem for foreign family offices and private wealth structures, the GIFT City financial regulatory authority said.

Some wealthy Asians are seeking alternatives to Dubai due to geopolitical tensions in the Gulf.

Poornam Asset Management has an authorised capital of ₹7 million ($75,175.86) and is directed by Vineet Kulbandhu Sharma, currently based in London, public disclosures showed. Mr. Sharma is a fund manager of two funds based in Hong Kong and London.

Flight of capital issue

Previously, GIFT City provided in-principle approval to family offices linked to Indian billionaire Azim Premji and Infosys cofounder Narayana Murthy's family fund, Catamaran Artha. However, a final licence to the entities allowing them to manage wealth from GIFT City has yet to be granted due to concerns over potential flight of Indian capital, the official added.

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Mahatma Gandhi Hospital Jalorigate Jodhpur Tel No. 0291-2636390
E-mail- suptd.mgh.jdp@rajasthan.gov.in
NOTICE INVITING BID
NIB No. 09/2025-26 Date: 23-03- 2026
1. Sealed Single Stage Two-parts (Technical and Financial) unconditional bids are invited through E-bidding procedure by Secretary Rajasthan Medicare Relief Society (M.G.H.) Jodhpur up to **05:00 PM of 04.05.2026**. Tender are to be submitted duly digitally signed in electronic format only on website **http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in** tender documents can be downloaded from above mentioned website. Details for the same are as follows:-

S. No.	Name of the subject matter/ particulars	Specifications	Estimated Cost (Lacs)	Price of Bidding Document (Rs.)	Bid Processing Fee	Bid Security Fee (Lacs)	Date and Time for download and submission of bids
1	Rate contract for Orthopaedic Implants & Accessories	As mentioned in the Bid Document.	2700.00	5000/-	2500/-	54.00	As mentioned in the Bid Document

NIB Code SMC2526A0332 UBN No. SMC2526GLRC00445
Secretary
Rajasthan Medicare Relief Society
(M.G.H.) JODHPUR
DIPR/C/7048/2026

NATIONAL BOARD OF EXAMINATIONS
IN MEDICAL SCIENCES
(Autonomous body of the M/o. Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India)
NAMS Building, Medical Enclave, Ansari Nagar,
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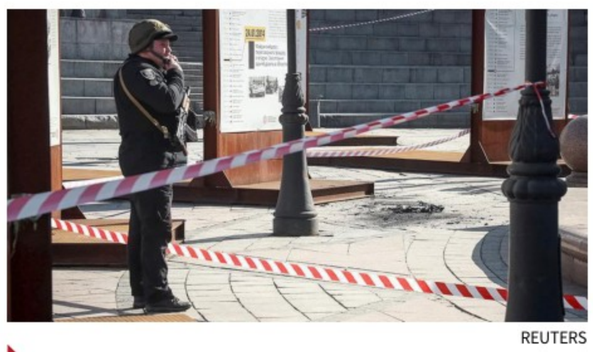
FOREIGN MEDICAL GRADUATE EXAMINATION (FMGE) – JUNE 2026
NOTICE
National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS) shall conduct the **FMGE – JUNE 2026** on **28-06-2026.**
Applications are being invited from **21-04-2026 (03:00PM Onwards) to 11-05-2026 (Till 11:55 PM)** at NBEMS website:
https://natboard.edu.in/viewnbeexam?exam=fmge
Candidate Care Support: +91-7996165333
• Helpline Portal on applicant login page
• Communication Web Portal on NBEMS Website

MOSCOW

Russia arrests German woman in alleged Ukraine-linked bomb plot



REUTERS

Russia said on Monday it had arrested a German woman who planned to blow up a services facility. The FSB said the woman had been dragged into the plot by a citizen from a Central Asian country, working on orders from Ukraine. She was detained and found with an improvised explosive device in her bag in Pyatigorsk. AFP

JERUSALEM

Outrage grows over Israeli soldier's vandalism of crucifix in Lebanon

AFP

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Foreign Minister and military on Monday condemned the desecration of a crucifix smashed by an Israeli soldier in a southern Lebanese village of Debel, home to Christians. Debel is one of dozens of villages in south Lebanon now under effective Israeli occupation. REUTERS

MADRID

Machado vows to return, pushes for swift elections in Venezuela

REUTERS

Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado expects to be back in her home country before the end of 2026 and is urging the United States to accelerate plans for elections. The Nobel Peace Prize winner said that the longer it took for the country to hold elections the greater the risk of civil unrest. REUTERS

TOKYO

7.7-magnitude quake hits off Japan, advisory issued for coastal areas

REUTERS

An earthquake registering a preliminary magnitude of 7.7 off northern Japan on Monday prompted a short-lived tsunami alert and the advisory of a risk of a possible mega-quake for coastal areas. The quake occurred off the coast of Sanriku at around 4:53 p.m. local time on Monday, the meteorological agency said. AP

Tamil parties in Sri Lanka seek sustained Indian push to fulfil Indo-Lanka Accord

Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan 'assures' Sri Lankan Tamil representatives that India's position on devolution stands; provincial polls discussed with Sri Lankan side; the 1987 framework seeking equal rights and greater political power for Tamils 'has not been fully realised', say parties

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Tamil parties have sought sustained Indian engagement to ensure the implementation of the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987, signed during the early years of the civil war to address the aspirations of Tamils for equal rights and greater political power.

A delegation of leaders representing Tamils from the island's north and east on Sunday conveyed this to Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan, who was on a two-day official visit to Sri Lanka.

Pointing to the "state-to-state treaty", signed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President J.R. Jayewardene in July 1987, the prominent Tamil party Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi (ITAK) pointed out that the true spirit of the Accord is yet to be realised.

Representatives of Sri Lanka's Tamil parties with Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan in Colombo on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"We told him that the Accord has never been fully realised, not even through the 13th Amendment, which is also yet to be fully implemented. Regardless of whoever comes into government here [in Sri Lanka] or there [India], the agreement must be fulfilled, and that is to have an arrangement based on a federal model, with irrevocable power sharing," ITAK General Secretary and former Jaffna MP M.A. Sumanthiran told *The Hindu*, following the meeting.

Since the end of the civil war in May 2009, the ITAK and the Tamil National Alliance it formerly led, have consistently sought meaningful power devolution within a "united, undivided, indivisible" Sri Lanka, including through the 13th Amendment. The only legislative guarantee of a measure of power devolution to the island's nine provinces, including the Tamil-majority Northern and Eastern provinces, the Amendment flows from the Accord. However, neither has seen full implementation in the four decades.

"When we pointed out that Provincial Councils have been defunct for over seven years, the Vice President told us he has spoken to the Sri Lankan side about holding early provincial elections and assured us that India's position on power devolution remains constant and that there is no change," Mr. Sumanthiran said.

Waning interest

For a decade now, Tamil commentators have been flagging India's apparently waning interest in Sri Lanka's Tamil question, amid its development cooperation and strategic priorities. Meanwhile, Tamil political parties have raised concern in every meeting with the Indian leadership. The widely respected late Tamil leader R. Sampanthan told *The Hindu* in 2022 that India has a "special duty" in ensuring that the island's Tamil question is resolved.

While seeking a greater push from India on power devolution, senior Tamil politician and ITAK President C.V.K. Sivagnanam recalled Prime Minister Narendra Modi's March 2015 address to the Sri Lankan Parliament when he said he was a "firm believer in cooperative federalism."

Tamil National People's Front General Secretary and former Jaffna MP Selvarajah Kajendren handed over a document to the Indian Vice-President, outlining their position that meaningful power devolution is not possible within Sri Lanka's unitary state structure.

While the leftist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna [JVP] has historically opposed the Indo-Lanka Accord, seeing it as India-imposed, the ruling National People's Power coalition it leads has promised to bring in a new Constitution addressing Tamil aspirations. The exercise is yet to take off, and no timeline has been shared yet.

The Tamil parties and the Vice-President also discussed Indian assistance for development projects, the persisting fisheries conflict and the possible return of Sri Lankan refugees in India. On the question of returning refugees, Mr. Radhakrishnan said India could explore supporting the returning refugees. "He said India spends money looking after them there, so they might as well put that to use to set them up here, with housing and other needs," Mr. Sumanthiran said.

Israel military warns residents to stay out of south Lebanon

Reuters
BEIRUT/JERUSALEM

Israel on Monday told residents of south Lebanon to stay out of a belt of territory running the length of the border and not to approach the area of the Litani River, entrenching its grip over southern Lebanon despite a ceasefire in the war with Hezbollah.

The U.S.-mediated, 10-day ceasefire took effect on Thursday, largely halting the war between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah that spiralled out of the conflict between the United States and Iran.

Buffer zone

But it remains fragile, with Israeli troops occupying territory deep in the south, aiming to create a buffer zone to shield northern Israel from Hezbollah attack, while the group says it maintains the "right to resist" Israeli occupation.

The Israeli military posted a map on social media with a red line through 21 villages across the south, and said residents should not move into the area between it and the border, saying Israeli troops were maintaining positions in the south "in the face of ongoing terrorist activities" by the Iran-backed group.

The map named more than 50 other villages in the south to which residents should not return.

The Israeli military also said it was not permitted to approach the area of the Litani River, which mostly flows to the north of the area the Israeli military said residents should stay out of.

On Sunday, the Israeli military published a similar map, showing for the first time its new deployment line inside Lebanon.

Stretching east to west, the deployment line on the map runs 5-10 km deep from the border into Lebanese territory, covering an area where the Israeli military has been destroying villages.

Canada's economic ties with U.S. a weakness, says Carney

Associated Press
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said in a video address released on Sunday that Canada's strong economic ties to the United States were once a strength but are now a weakness that must be corrected.

In the 10-minute address, Mr. Carney spoke about his government's efforts to strengthen the Canadian economy by attracting new investments and signing trade deals with other countries.

"The world is more dangerous and divided," Mr. Carney said.

"The U.S. has fundamentally changed its approach to trade, raising its tariffs to levels last seen during the Great Depression.

"Many of our former strengths, based on our close ties to America, have become weaknesses. Weaknesses that we must correct."

Mr. Carney said tariffs imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump have affected workers in the auto and steel industries. He added that businesses are holding back investments "restrained by the pall of uncertainty that's hanging over all of us."

Many Canadians have also been angered by Mr. Trump comments suggesting Canada become the 51st State.

Mr. Carney said he plans to give Canadians regular updates on his government's efforts to diversify away from the U.S.

"Security can't be achieved by ignoring the obvious or downplaying the very real threats that we Canadians face," he said. "I promise you I will never sugarcoat our challenges."

Embattled Starmer says he was not aware that ex-envoy Mandelson had failed vetting process

Sriram Lakshman

U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer was fighting for his job on Monday afternoon, as he told the House of Commons that he would not have appointed Peter Mandelson as the British envoy to Washington, if he had known the disgraced ambassador who had links to U.S. sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, had failed being cleared by U.K. Security Vetting (UKSV).

Takes responsibility

Mr. Starmer, however, said that he took responsibility for the decision to appoint Mr. Mandelson and that the victims of Epstein were "clearly failed by his decision"

The U.K. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), overruled the UKSV recommendation that Mr. Mandelson not be given 'developed vetting' – the highest level of security clearance – *The Guardian* had reported last week.

"I simply do not accept that Foreign Office officials could not have informed me of UKSV recommendations whilst also maintaining the necessary confidentiality that vetting requires," Mr. Starmer told the House.

Keir Starmer

Neither he nor any other Ministers were told of the UKSV recommendation, the Prime Minister said. The specifics of why Mr. Mandelson failed the vetting have not been made public.

"A deliberate decision was taken to withhold that material from me," Mr. Starmer said.

At one point in his statement, Mr. Starmer said he knew that many MPs would find "these facts to be incredible".

Mr. Starmer knew of this for the first time on April 14, he told the Commons, but had waited until Monday to make a statement to Parliament as he was investigating who decided to overrule UKSV's advice.

Mr. Starmer was responding to an accusation from Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch that he had breached the ministerial code of conduct by not correcting the record at the earliest opportunity. Opposition leaders have called on Mr. Starmer in recent days to resign over the scandal.

Mr. Mandelson was appointed subject to obtaining security clearance, Mr. Starmer said, adding that he had now changed the process so that appointments could only be announced after candidates pass security vetting.

India violating its obligations, says UN Rapporteur

Muneef Khan
NEW DELHI

India "is violating its obligations under international law", said UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Francesca Albanese, in an interview with *The Hindu*.

Ms. Albanese's comments were in response to questions about the findings in her latest report titled 'Torture and Genocide', which she presented at the 61st session of the UN Human Rights Council, on March 23.

The report has examined Israel's "systematic use of torture against Palestinians" from the occupied Palestinian territory, since October 7, 2023. It notes how various forms of torture – such as forced displacement, mass killings, deprivation, among others – have "become integral to the "domination of and punishment" inflicted on men, women and children".

Francesca Albanese

Responding to how she views India's legal and moral responsibility by associating with Israel and its war, Ms. Albanese said that while India is "violating its obligations" under International law, it might also be "facing responsibility".

"In an ideal world, if there was a court that was capable of dealing with all member states who have violated the law to support Israel causing harm to the Palestinians, probably the Indian government would face this court as well," Ms. Albanese said.

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Israel in February, he spoke to the Knesset hailing India's cultural, political and military relationship with Israel. He described Israel as the "fatherland" of Indian-origin Jews, while the visit also brought upgraded ties sealed with a 'Special Strategic Partnership'. Within days, the U.S. and Israel initiated a war against Iran.

According to the report, Israeli authorities have arrested more than 18,500 Palestinians since October 2023, which include at least 1,500 children. As of February 26, Israel still holds 9,245 Palestinians in various detention facilities, many of them held without trial.

On March 30, the Knesset passed a death-penalty law, which according to critics, targets only Palestinians prisoners.

Ms. Albanese stated that Israel's National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir – who pushed for the law – was the face of the policy which has institutionalised torture.

"What Mr. Ben-Gvir has done is simply to institutionalise and to make legal what until some years or decades ago was believed to be exceptionally incidental. Torture is not incidental. It is central to a broader system of violence aiming to destroy the Palestinians as individuals and as a people, as body and mind, as capacity to exist in the future, and even to have a decent memory of their past," Ms. Albanese said.

(The author is an independent journalist)

China objects as U.S., allies begin drills with Philippines

Associated Press
MANILA

The United States and the Philippines kicked off one of their largest combat exercises on Monday in an annual display of allied military might aimed at deterring aggression in Asia, despite Washington's preoccupation with the war in West Asia.

The drills will expand this year to include new full-time participants including Japan and Canada, which have signed agreements with Manila, the Philippine military said.

More than 17,000 American and Filipino military personnel will participate in the exercise. The event will last nearly three weeks and include mock battle scenarios and live-fire manoeuvres in locations including Philippine provinces facing the disputed South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait.

China has objected to the U.S.-Philippine drills, saying they are aimed at containing its global rise.

The Philippine military has insisted the exercise does not target any country and is needed to prepare allied forces to respond to natural disasters.

U.S. military officials said the exercise underscores Washington's commitment to Asia.

"Regardless of the challenges elsewhere in the world, the U.S. focus on the Indo-Pacific and our commitment to the Philippines remains unwavering," Marine Lt. Gen. Christian Wortman said.

In Beijing, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Guo Jiakun warned, without mentioning the U.S., that bringing foreign forces with a record of impunity to the region could spark confrontation. "Unilateralism and military bullying have already brought profound disasters to the world," he said.

LEAKING RUNS

The last four overs were a horror story: GT batting coach Hayden

VIJAY SONEJI

As Gujarat Titans slumped to a heavy defeat against Mumbai Indians, batting coach Matthew Hayden lashed out at the death bowling. "When you look back at those last four overs, that was a horror story. Giving away 73 runs is unacceptable," he said, adding that it was "a horrible day" for the bowlers barring Kagiso Rabada.

TEAM EFFORT

I studied the batters and talked to the captain, says Ashwani

VIJAY SONEJI

MI pacer Ashwani Kumar marked his first game of IPL 2026 with a four-wicket haul at the Narendra Modi Stadium. Under challenging conditions, he studied each batter carefully before executing his plans. "I studied batter to batter. The pitch was demanding. I talked to the captain, and we decided to act accordingly," Ashwani said.

PROUD COACH

'The way Nitish is sequencing the balls to the batters is helping him'

NAGARA GOPAL

It's great to see Nitish Kumar play the way he's been playing so far in this IPL. Last year, he probably, by his own admission, he didn't quite play at the level he would have expected to. The pace is definitely up... the way he's sequencing his balls to different batters is really helping him — SRH assistant coach James Franklin.

FIT FOR DUTY

The plan is for Cummins to play against RR on Saturday: Franklin

FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

SRH assistant coach James Franklin expects regular skipper Pat Cummins to be fit for the game against RR on Saturday. "That is the plan as far as I'm aware. He's cleared all the scans that have been required of him from Cricket Australia. He rejoined a couple of days ago. The plan is for him to be available for the game in Jaipur".

Tilak puts on a show as MI roars back with big win

The southpaw's unbeaten 45-ball 101 powers the five-time champion to 199 for five; Ashwani impresses with a four-wicket haul while Santner and Ghazanfar claim two each to bowl out GT for 100

IPL-19

Shayan Acharya
AHMEDABAD

Tilak Varma found his form when it mattered most, producing a scintillating maiden IPL century to power Mumbai Indians to a commanding 99-run victory over Gujarat Titans on Monday.

After a string of low scores, Tilak began cautiously before shifting gears dramatically, finishing unbeaten on 101 off 45 balls (8x4, 7x6). Much to the delight of a 40,000-strong crowd at the Narendra Modi Stadium, he went on the rampage in the final six overs, smashing 82 runs off just 23 deliveries. Mumbai Indians plundered 96 runs in that phase to post a formidable 199 for five and seize control of the contest.

Tilak led the charge with ruthless precision, hammering 26 runs in an over from Ashok Sharma before dismantling Prasidh Krishna with calculated aggression.

The southpaw reached his century with a boundary off the final ball of the innings, his animated celebration reflecting both relief and redemption.

Perfect outing: Tilak could not have chosen a better occasion to notch up his maiden IPL century. Ashwani and Santner ensured there was no way back for GT. VIJAY SONEJI

Emulating Jayasuriya

He also equalled the joint-fastest hundred for MI, matching Sanath Jayasuriya's effort. In response, Titans faltered early and never recovered.

Jasprit Bumrah struck with the very first ball, removing Sai Sudharsan, and the middle-order failed to deliver. With Jos Buttler and Shubman Gill falling cheaply, the chase lost direction as wickets fell at regular intervals. The Titans were eventually bowled out for 100.

It was a dominant show from the Mumbai bowlers. Mitchell Santner marked his return with two key wickets, removing Washington Sundar and Glenn Phillips, while Impact Player Ashwani Kumar kept the pressure on with four wickets.

Earlier, MI began shakily. Debutant Danish Malewar lasted just four deliveries, while Quinton de Kock and Suryakumar Yadav also fell early, leaving it at 46 for three after the PowerPlay.

Kagiso Rabada was the biggest threat, consistently breaching the 150kph mark. However, the recovery was orchestrated by Naman Dhir, whose composed 32-ball 45 laid the platform in a 52-run stand with Tilak. Then Tilak took complete control, while skipper Hardik Pandya provided stability in an 81-run stand.

It ensured MI returned to winning ways after four successive defeats.

SCOREBOARD

MUMBAI INDIANS
Quinton de Kock c & b Rabada 13 *(11b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Danish Malewar lbw b Rabada 2 *(4b)*, Naman Dhir c Rabada b Prasidh 45 *(32b, 6x4, 1x6)*, Suryakumar Yadav b Rabada 15 *(10b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Tilak Varma (not out) 101 *(45b, 8x4, 7x6)*, Hardik Pandya c Phillips b Siraj 15 *(16b, 1x4)*, Sherfane Rutherford (not out) 1 *(2b)*; Extras (b-1, lb-4, w-2): 7; Total (for five wkts. in 20 overs): 199.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-10 (Malewar, 1.5 overs), 2-25 (de Kock, 3.3), 3-44 (Suryakumar, 5.5), 4-96 (Naman, 12.3), 5-177 (Hardik, 18.5).

TITANS BOWLING
Siraj 4-0-25-1, Rabada 4-0-33-3, Ashok 3-0-38-0, Rashid 4-0-31-0, Prasidh 4-0-54-1, Washington 1-0-13-0.

GUJARAT TITANS
Sai Sudharsan c Bhagat b Bumrah 0 *(1b)*, Shubman Gill c Naman b Ashwani 14 *(13b, 3x4)*, Jos Buttler lbw b Hardik 5 *(6b, 1x4)*, Washington Sundar c Naman b Santner 26 *(17b, 5x4)*, Glenn Phillips c & b Santner 6 *(8b)*, Rahul Tewatia **(Impact Player for Prasidh)** c de Kock b Ashwani 8 *(11b, 1x4)*, Shahrukh Khan c Naman b Ashwani 17 *(13b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Rashid Khan c sub (Bawa) b Ashwani 4 *(6b)*, Kagiso Rabada st. de Kock b Ghazanfar 12 *(14b, 2x4)*, Ashok Sharma (not out) 1 *(3b)*, Mohammed Siraj lbw b Ghazanfar 0 *(3b)*; Extras (w-7): 7; Total (in 15.5 overs): 100.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-0 (Sai Sudharsan, 0.1), 2-5 (Buttler, 1.2), 3-40 (Gill, 4.4), 4-54 (Washington, 7.2), 5-55 (Phillips, 7.4), 6-79 (Tewatia, 10.6), 7-85 (Rashid, 12.2), 8-86 (Shahrukh, 12.6), 9-99 (Rabada, 15.2).

MUMBAI INDIANS BOWLING
Bumrah 3-0-15-1, Hardik 1-0-18-1, Bhagat 2-0-10-0, Ashwani **(Impact Player for Rutherford)** 4-0-24-4, Ghazanfar 2.5-0-17-2, Santner 3-0-16-2.

Toss: Gujarat Titans.
Player-of-the-Match: Tilak.
Mumbai Indians won by 99 runs.

Next assignment

MI: April 23 vs. CSK Mumbai, 7.30 p.m.
GT: April 24 vs. RCB Bengaluru, 7.30 p.m.

Clash of contrasting styles as SRH takes on DC

Vivek Krishnan
HYDERABAD

Distinct philosophies will be at work when Sunrisers Hyderabad hosts Delhi Capitals in an IPL-19 fixture at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium here on Tuesday.

If Sunrisers' modus operandi with the willow gravitates towards belligerence from the very outset, Capitals' approach tends to be more measured and in sync with the situation.

These divergent methods have yielded similar results this season. With three wins and as many losses, SRH has collected six points from six outings.

Capitals also have six points, with their five matches comprising three wins and two defeats. Spirits should be high in both camps after their most recent outings ended in triumph.

From DC's perspective, it was essential to ensure that a run of two straight defeats was nipped in the bud. It managed to do so by sneaking past Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the Garden City on Saturday. Truth be told, Axar Patel's men nearly bungled a chase of 176, but the fact that David Miller got them over the line in the final over must have been a source of relief. The South African had been on the bitter end of a taut chase against Gujarat Titans not long ago.

Just as comforting for Capitals is the news that Axar is fit after retiring hurt on 26 against RCB due to cramps. "He is fine and ready," DC head coach Hemang Badani said.

For the host, the batting is firing on all cylinders again. That Abhishek Sharma is back to his marauding best is a good sign, and with Ishan Kishan and Heinrich Klaasen also producing innings of substance, the top-order is in fine shape.

On the bowling front, SRH has veered towards youthful zest by reposing faith in the pace pair of Praful Hinge and Sakib Hussain and left-arm wrist-spinner Shivang Kumar. Will SRH's unbridled aggression hold sway? Or will Capitals' relative pragmatism prevail?

Talking cricket: SRH's Harshal and DC's Axar share a light moment during practice. NAGARA GOPAL

Today's match

SUNRISERS vs. DELHI CAPITALS

Hyderabad, 7.30 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: **26**
SRH **13** | DC **12** | NR **1**

MEETINGS IN 2025
No Result
DC won by **seven wickets**

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIOHOTSTAR

Miller has shown character after heartbreak: Badani

Vivek Krishnan
HYDERABAD

In two games spread across 10 days in this IPL, David Miller's output as a finisher has generated markedly contrasting outcomes.

If he was chastised for his failure to lead Delhi Capitals to victory against Gujarat Titans on April 8, he was celebrated for his boundary-laden exploits against Royal Challengers Bengaluru last Saturday.

Polarising

DC's one-run defeat to GT polarised opinion, especially because Miller had a chance to secure a tie off the penultimate ball.

With two runs needed off two deliveries, the southpaw refused an easy single on offer in an attempt to get the job done off his own bat.

The decision stung as he failed to make contact off the final ball. It is a testament to the 36-year-old's vast experience that he was able to brush the disappointment aside when confronted with a nervy chase against RCB.

DC coach Hemang Badani said on Monday that he concurred with Miller's call against Titans.

"First and foremost, we need to understand that he's somebody who's been around for a very long time. Yes, it's heartbreaking to lose a game like the one we lost against Gujarat.

"And there was enough chatter about it on social media, on the news, on the telly and even by the broadcaster. But the bottom line is that the player takes a call at some time," Badani said.

'Right call'

"And sometimes you get the right call, sometimes you don't get the right call. And I still believe that he took the right call. But to come out of that, he's shown character".

Rabada consoles Miller after the DC-GT match. FILE PHOTO: SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

It's all about understanding what works for you: Connolly

Dhruva Prasad
NEW CHANDIGARH

In Punjab Kings' thrill-a-minute batting line-up, which posted this IPL season's highest total on Sunday, Cooper Connolly's approach strikes a discordant note.

The 22-year-old Australian doesn't attempt to manufacture those cheeky shots that have become synonymous with T20 cricket but rather relies on his gift of timing and placement.

Neither does he try to force the pace of the game. During his 182-run stand with the belligerent Priyansh Arya, he bided his time in the PowerPlay before finishing with a 46-ball 87 that helped Kings to a match-winning 254 for seven against Lucknow Super Giants.

"Everyone has their own understanding of their ability and how they go about it, and what works for them.

"It is about individually understanding what works for you in those moments and what makes you successful for a long period of time. We have discussions about what works for each other, and we take little things from each other's books," Connolly said, while adding that he was enjoying watching Priyansh "go about it in his own way" from the non-striker's end.

For Connolly, who tops the run chart for Kings with 223 runs in five innings, "there is a time and a place" for innovative stroke-making.

"I think it's about knowing their (the batters') strengths and sticking to them. They know where they're dominant," Connolly said about the different approaches of the Kings batters.

It was a similar case of backing his strengths and ability for Super Giants pacer Prince Yadav, who bowled a stingy spell (two for 25 in four overs) in a match that saw more than 450 runs being plundered.

"The plan was to bowl as many yorkers as I could; it is something I have been working on".

Touch player: Connolly relies on his gift of timing and placement. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Points table

	M	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
Punjab Kings	6	5	0	1	11	1.420
Royal Challengers	6	4	2	0	8	1.171
Rajasthan Royals	6	4	2	0	8	0.599
Sunrisers Hyderabad	6	3	3	0	6	0.566
Delhi Capitals	5	3	2	0	6	0.310
Gujarat Titans	6	3	3	0	6	-0.821
Mumbai Indians	6	2	4	0	4	0.067
Chennai Super Kings	6	2	4	0	4	-0.780
Lucknow Super Giants	6	2	4	0	4	-1.173
Kolkata Knight Riders	7	1	5	1	3	-0.879

INBRIEF

Suraj, Rouqaia win Chennai PSA Challenger Tour title

India's Suraj Kumar Chand clinched the men's title at the HCL Squash PSA Challenger Tour, defeating South Korea's Jeongmin Ryu in straight games at the Indian Squash Academy in Chennai on Monday. The second seed, ranked 134 in the world, won 11-5, 11-9, 11-3 to secure his fourth PSA Tour title. In the women's final, Egypt's Rouqaia Othman, the seventh seed, beat Malaysia's Harleein Tan 12-10, 11-7, 9-11, 11-7.

India u-17 men to play two friendlies against Qatar

The India under-17 men's team will play two friendly matches, will be played behind closed doors. against Qatar on April 25 and 28 in Doha, the AIFF said on Monday.

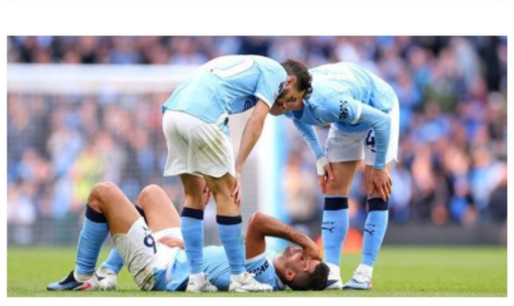
Nahid stars with a five-for as Bangladesh levels series

Pace sensation Nahid Rana (five for 32) set up Bangladesh's comfortable six-wicket win over New Zealand in the second One-Day International (ODI) as the home team levelled the three-match series 1-1 in Dhaka on Monday.

The scores: New Zealand 198 in 48.4 overs (Nick Kelly 83, Nahid Rana 5/32) lost to Bangladesh199/4 in 35.3 overs (Tanzid Hasan 76, Najmul Hossain Shanto retd. hurt 50).
Toss: NZ; **PoM:** Nahid.

Shapoor Zadran battling life-threatening disease

Former Afghanistan left-arm fast bowler Shapoor Zadran is battling for his life in the ICU of a New Delhi hospital, according to *ESPNcricinfo*. Zadran is suffering from *Hemophagocytic Lymphohistiocytosis* (HLH), a life-threatening disease, in which the immune system starts failing. Zadran represented Afghanistan in 80 International matches (44 ODIs and 36 T20Is) between 2009 and 2020.



Manchester City midfielder Rodri suffers groin injury

Manchester City midfielder Rodri sustained a groin injury in the 2-1 win over Arsenal in the Premier League, manager Pep Guardiola said. The Spain international came off in the 88th minute.

Bombers HC routs Coorg HA in KSHA A-division league

Bombers HC thrashed Coorg Hockey Association 6-0 in the KSHA A-division league championship in Bengaluru on Monday. In another encounter, Guru HC overcame Rangers HC 4-2.

Reds United gets full points against Technico 2-0

Reds United FC defeated Technico 2-0 in the KSFA A-division women's league football championship in Bengaluru on Monday.

It's time for a women's World champion: Aaron

The country's first IM lauds Vaishali's fantastic show at the Candidates; the 24-year-old GM says being resilient and not giving up in any situation helped her come up trumps in Cyprus

Rewarding excellence: Vaishali being felicitated by TNSCA president M. Manickam in the presence of Manuel Aaron, coach R.B. Ramesh, R. Praggnanandhaa and Velammal's M.V.M. Velmohan. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

CHESS

C. Shyam Sundar
CHENNAI

R. Vaishali has been the toast of the chess fraternity in the country after she phenomenally broke through to win the FIDE Women's Candidates title. The Chennai Grandmaster remains unaffected by the adulation and attention she has been receiving.

It wasn't any different at a felicitation function got up by the Tamil Nadu State Chess Association, even as she was swarmed by school children and players, and she tried to oblige every request for an autograph or selfie.

Manuel Aaron, India's first-ever International Master, hailed the efforts of the 24-year-old. "We have two World champions in the men's section and it is time for one in the women's category too.

"I followed all her games at the Candidates and she played very well," mused Aaron while appreciating her show.

The 92-year-old Aaron said the win with black pieces against Aleksandra Goryachkina was fantastic and added that the game showed her strategic prowess.

Hailing Vaishali's progress in recent times, he wished she could win the biggest prize when she takes on China's Ju Wenjun in the championship match.

Support matters

Her coach R.B. Ramesh said it was good to see chess players receive a lot of support these days which enables them to perform at optimum level.

Responding to the felicitation, Vaishali said she had been bowled over by all the good wishes and that she would put her best foot forward in the title match later this year.

She said till the last round, five-six players had a chance to win the tournament and added that being resilient helped her come up trumps. "Maybe I was resilient. I didn't give up in some positions. I had some worse positions but I kept defending well," she said, thanking the State chess association for its support.

Clogged? Praggnanandhaa says it is difficult to say what went wrong at the Candidates. FIDE

Praggnanandhaa not perturbed by the 'blip'

C. Shyam Sundar
CHENNAI

The roles were reversed, so to say.

R. Praggnanandhaa watched on as his sister Vaishali basked in glory. The Chennai GM, who often overshadows his *akka* (elder sister) due to his exploits on the board, seemed chuffed at seeing his sibling hog all the limelight at a felicitation function here on Monday.

The 20-year-old Praggnanandhaa, who was expected to win the Open section at the Candidates and set up an all-Indian clash with reigning champion D. Gukesh, instead found the going tough and finished seventh in an eight-player field.

However, he didn't seem too worried about the blip and said 'it happens' with a shrug of his shoulders.

"It's difficult to say what went wrong. It's not the result we hoped for. (I) prepared well and was fresh-...but okay, it's one tournament and it can happen. And also I think the winner (Jakhovir Sindarov) played really well," he said.

> I think she got what she's been working hard for. It is totally deserved. If *akk*a plays well, she can beat Ju Wenjun
> **PRAGGNANANDHAA**

He refused to believe that the pressure of expectation affected him. "I don't think so. Certainly, there is pressure when you are playing at such a high level. I don't think that's what the problem was as I felt I was playing better than what my result shows," he added.

Praggnanandhaa was delighted with his sister's performance in the Candidates. "I think she got what she's been working hard for. It is totally deserved."

"If *akka* plays well, she can beat Ju Wenjun," he said, happy to cede the attention to his sister for a change.

Aronyak Ghosh is currently ranked 401 in the world, with a standard rating of 2533. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Aronyak becomes India's 95th GM

Sports Bureau

Aronyak Ghosh became India's 95th Grandmaster as he achieved his final norm at the Bangkok Chess Club Open 2026.

The Kolkata-based player scored seven points from nine rounds to finish tied for first place.

The National Rapid champion, who earned his first GM norm at the Sants Open in 2023 and his second at the Annemasse Masters in 2024, took two more years to earn his third and final norm to gain the title.

Aronyak had qualified for the FIDE World Cup in Goa last year, in which he beat Poland's Mateusz Bartel in the first round before losing to America's Levon Aronian.

He is currently ranked 401 in the world, with a standard rating of 2533.

LIVE TELECAST

IPL: Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m.
ISL: Sony Sports Ten 2 & FanCode, 7.30 p.m.
LaLiga: FanCode, 10.30 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 1 & JioHotstar, 12.30 a.m. (Wednesday)

It's a new league now: Arteta on the title race

EURO LEAGUES

Agencies
MANCHESTER

Mikel Arteta said Arsenal remains "convinced" it will end a 22-year wait to win the Premier League despite losing 1-2 to Manchester City on Sunday.

The Gunners hold a three-point lead, but City has a game in hand.

"It's a new league now. We have three points of advantage; they have the game in hand.

"Everything is still to play for!"

The season for treble-chasing Bayern Munich is far from over, coach Vincent Kompany said after his team secured the Bundesliga title with four matches to go.

The Bavarians opened up a 15-point gap at the top of the league with a 4-2 win over Stuttgart but there was no lengthy celebrations, with the team still in the running for two more trophies.

"The season is not over yet. There are still things to be won," said Kompany.

Top results:
Serie A: Juventus 2 (David 2, Thuram 57) bt Bologna 0; Pisa 1 (Canestrelli 19) lost to Genoa 2 (Ekhator 41, Colombo 55-pen).

Arteta and Guardiola. REUTERS

Bagan beats NEUFC, goes top; PFC wins

ISL

Sports Bureau
GUWAHATI

Mohun Bagan Super Giant pipped NorthEast United FC with a 1-0 win in a rain-affected ISL contest at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium on Sunday.

The defending champion took the lead inside five minutes through Robson – who arrived late into the box to finish a well-worked move – and then relied on a disciplined defensive display to see out the result in difficult conditions.

With this win, Mohun Bagan moved to the top of the table (20 points from nine matches), opening a two-point lead over Mumbai City FC. NorthEast United FC remains 12th with seven points from seven games.

On Monday, Punjab FC defeated Inter Kashi 3-0 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi.

Samir Zeljkovic (37), Effiong Nsungusi (51) and Bede Osuji (72) netted for the host, which consolidated its seventh spot in the standings with 14 points from eight matches.

The visitor remains eighth (11 points from nine games) despite the heavy loss.

The results: NorthEast United FC 0 lost to Mohun Bagan Super Giant 1 (Robinho 5).
At New Delhi: Punjab FC 3 (Zeljkovic 37, Nsungusi 51 and Osuji 72) bt Inter Kashi 0.

Manpreet, Pathak return to the National fold

HOCKEY

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

A 36-member core group for the men's team was announced by Hockey India with the trio of Manpreet Singh, Dilpreet Singh and Krishan Pathak returning to the fold. The camp, that got underway at the SAI Centre in Bengaluru on Monday, will continue till May 9 with the primary focus being on tactical cohesion, conditioning and match-simulation sessions.

The three senior players had been excluded for the home leg of the FIH Pro League in February despite an impressive outing in the Hockey India League in January.

The camp is part of the team's preparations ahead of a busy season beginning with the European leg of the FIH Pro League and continuing up to the World Cup and the Asian Games.

Coach Craig Fulton will also be looking to build rhythm, refine combinations and strengthen depth across all departments.

The squad: Goalkeepers: Krishan Pathak, Pawan Malik, Suraj Karkera, H.S. Mohith, Princedeep Singh; **Defenders:** Amit Rohidas, Jarmanpreet Singh, Sanjay, Harmanpreet Singh, Jugraj Singh, Sumit, P.C. Boby, Yashdeep Siwach, Nilam Sanjeep Xess, Amandeep Lakra.

Midfielders: Rajinder Singh, Manmeet Singh, Hardik Singh, Rabichandra Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Vishnu Kant Singh, Rajkumar Pal, Nilakanta Sharma, Rosan Kujur, Manpreet Singh.

Forwards: Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Shilanand Lakra, Mandeep Singh, Araijeet Singh Hundal, Angad Bir Singh, Uttam Singh, Selvam Karthi, Aditya Lalage, Maninder Singh, Dilpreet Singh.

Manpreet. FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Pathak. FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

India listed among countries with high risk for doping in track & field

Sports Bureau
KOLKATA

Indian athletes will have to go through stringent anti-doping stipulations, including minimum testing requirements, as the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) has moved the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) from Category 'B' to 'A' because of the "consistently extremely high risk of doping in India."

The AIU, an independent body managing integrity related issues in international athletics, recently took the decision on the basis of Rule 15 of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) on categorisation of federations according to their doping risk to the sport. The AIU noted that India ranked in the top two for the most Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs) in athletics between 2022 and 2025. "In 2022, India recorded 48 ADRVs (second); in 2023, 63 (second); in 2024, 71 (first); and for 2025, India has recorded 30 ADRVs so far (first)."

AIU chair David Howman said: "The doping situation in India has been high-risk for a long time and, unfortunately, the quality of the domestic anti-doping programme is simply not proportionate to the doping risk. While the AFI has advocated for anti-doping reforms within India, not enough has changed. The AIU will now work with the AFI to achieve reforms to safeguard the integrity of athletics, as we have done with other 'Category A' member federations." Belarus, Bahrain, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Russia and Ukraine are also there in Category 'A'.

"We will continue to work with the AIU and National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) in the battle against doping in Indian athletics. The AFI has been advocating to criminalise the perpetrators of doping, especially at the grassroots level. It will deter coaches and parents from resorting to doping young athletes," said an AFI release.

The AFI expressed confidence that sooner than later India would be taken off Category 'A'.